



Sell It Yourself Seller's Guide

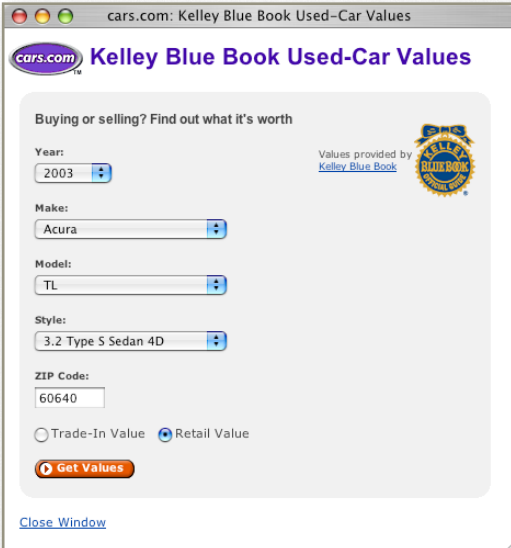
▶ Pricing Your Car	2
▶ Prepping Your Car for Sale	3
▶ Placing an Effective Ad	4
▶ Finding a Buyer	5
▶ Selling Your Car if You Still Owe Money on It	6
▶ Dealing With Fraudulent Buyers	7
▶ Meeting a Prospective Buyer for a Test Drive	8
▶ Securing Safe Payment	9
▶ Transferring Ownership	10
▶ Turning Over Your Car to the Buyer	11

► Pricing Your Car

The key to selling your car is pricing it wisely. A common problem among private-party sellers is overpricing.

Avoid that mistake by doing some initial research:

- Determine your car's value with our Kelley Blue Book pricing tool. The "Private Party Value" will be the most accurate for pricing your vehicle.
- Provide an honest evaluation of your car's condition to get a true idea of its worth. Remember: A potential buyer will tend to be more critical of the car's condition.
- Search used-car listings to see how similar models are priced in your area.
- Research dealer pricing, but don't expect to get the same amount in your sale. Dealer sales provide some benefits that private-party sales do not, such as return/exchange policies, limited warranties, etc.
- Factor in likely repair work. If your car is worth \$10,000 but needs a new clutch, then don't expect to receive full value. Reduce the price in accordance with necessary repairs.
- When creating your ad, you'll have the option to add "Or Best Offer" language to your asking price. Including OBO could result in more leads, but it may also result in lower initial offers.
- Be realistic: Is your used car still a popular and viable model, or are you driving a relic of an earlier age? Be honest with yourself and price it accordingly.



The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "cars.com: Kelley Blue Book Used-Car Values". The page features the cars.com logo and the text "Kelley Blue Book Used-Car Values". Below this is a form titled "Buying or selling? Find out what it's worth". The form includes the following fields and options:

- Year:** A dropdown menu set to "2003".
- Make:** A dropdown menu set to "Acura".
- Model:** A dropdown menu set to "TL".
- Style:** A dropdown menu set to "3.2 Type S Sedan 4D".
- ZIP Code:** A text input field containing "60640".
- Value Type:** Two radio buttons: "Trade-In Value" (unselected) and "Retail Value" (selected).
- Buttons:** A red "Get Values" button and a blue "Close Window" link.

On the right side of the form, there is a small logo for Kelley Blue Book and the text "Values provided by Kelley Blue Book".

► Prepping Your Car for Sale

**When selling your car privately, take a cue from dealers:
Make the car as attractive as possible.**

Use these guidelines:

- Start by cleaning your car thoroughly. Wash and wax the exterior, remove all interior and trunk clutter, vacuum and wipe down all interior surfaces, and clean all the windows. You could have it detailed by a professional to save time. This can range from \$20 to \$50 for a simple clean and wash, or from \$100 to \$200 for full detailing (shampoo, wax, etc.).
- Replace burnt-out lights or fuses and top off all fluid levels.
- Get a vehicle history report to present to the buyer; this provides credibility and builds trust. Reports from Carfax are available on cars.com.
- If you have detailed inspection records, prepare itemized copies (with service receipts) for prospective buyers. This shows you kept up with maintenance and suggests you're selling a reliable vehicle.
- Many buyers will want to have your car inspected by a mechanic of their choice. You may want to have your own mechanic inspect the car prior to placing the ad in order to avoid surprises closer to the sale.
- You could also have your car inspected by a third-party service. These companies inspect your car at your home or office and independently verify its description and general status. These services cost around \$100. You can find service providers online or in your local phone book.
- Make a copy of your vehicle title in preparation for the sale. If you don't have the title, call and ask your lending institution to send it to you with a lien release. If you paid off the loan years ago and the lending institution no longer exists, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (at 888-206-4662) can help you obtain your title.



► Placing an Effective Ad

You've prepared your car and have an asking price — now you need to *sell* it. A well-written ad will draw buyers' attention and can help sell the car quickly.

Some things to include:

- **Photos, photos, photos.**
Use as many photos as possible of your clean, well-maintained car.
- Mention amenities that you enjoyed most: a V-8 engine, all-wheel drive, a sunroof, an electronic stability system, other safety features, creature comforts, etc. What features were attractive to you when you purchased the car?
- Are you the car's only owner/driver? Has it been stored indoors during all seasons? These items may also be worth mentioning.
- Avoid generalities such as "Loaded!" or "Like new!" Instead, be specific: loaded with what? And how is it "like new"? Does it have relatively low mileage for its age? Is the interior immaculate?

Good Photos for Your Ad

- exterior front, rear and side angles
- interior front and rear seats
- the dashboard
- trunk/cargo space
- wheels and tires
- engine block
- other special features



Seller photos - Click any to enlarge





▶ Finding a Buyer

You can include several forms of contact information for potential buyers when you place your ad. Provide both daytime and evening phone numbers and an email address.

Some additional tips:

- If you receive a voice mail or email message, return the message promptly. The buyer was interested enough to contact you, but may cool off — or find a better car — if you don't reply within a day or two.
- During the initial exchange, get the prospective buyer's full name, email address and phone number; this will help you verify their identity.
- Treat your initial contact as a marketing opportunity. Try to really sell the car in your phone conversation or email. Emphasize its key selling points, but don't exaggerate.
- Be honest and direct if the buyer asks tough question. This will save you time by narrowing down leads to the most interested buyers. In addition, honesty builds credibility — nobody expects a used car to be perfect, but they want to know about problem areas.
- Encourage the potential buyer to see and test-drive the vehicle. Arrange a meeting point or test drive for the near future and make yourself available at the buyer's convenience, if possible.
- After the discussion, use directory listings or a follow-up email to confirm the buyer's identity. Be wary if the information provided doesn't check out.

▶ Selling Your Car if You Still Owe Money on It

It's possible to sell a car even if you still have an outstanding loan balance on the vehicle. This just adds a step to the sales transaction: closing the loan with your lender.

Some of your options:

- Call your lending institution to determine the best way to close out the loan. At the same time, ask about obtaining a lien release, which states there are no outstanding loan obligations on your car.
- If you owe more on your loan than you can readily pay prior to a sale, it's possible to close the loan and transfer ownership at the same time. For instance, Escrow.com (siy.cars.com/escrow) can facilitate payment to the lien holder during a normal escrow transaction.
- If neither of these options is satisfactory, conduct the sale at the bank or credit union that holds the title or lien on your car. Just pay off the loan balance with the sale proceeds and immediately sign over the title to the new owner. Call the lending institution beforehand to facilitate this transaction. If the lien holder is out of state, take the bill of sale to your state's Department of Motor Vehicles (siy.cars.com/dmv) to obtain a temporary operating permit for the buyer. Then once you've paid off the loan, you can send the signed title to the new owner. While this option involves more faith on the part of the buyer, you can tell them that it's also in your best interest to transfer the title as soon as possible to eliminate your personal liability.
- Leased cars represent a different situation. If you want to transfer your current lease to a new owner, you're better off using a lease-transfer service.



► Dealing With Fraudulent Buyers

While internet fraud has increased during the past several years, don't be discouraged from selling your car online; just be cautious and educate yourself about potential scams.

Be on the lookout for these popular scams:

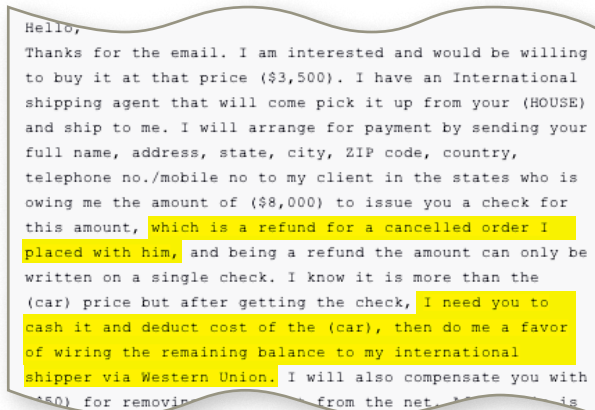
Cashier's Check Scams

In a typical scenario, a buyer — who usually inquires from overseas — arranges to pay for the car with a cashier's check or certified check in an amount that's more than the vehicle's purchase price. The buyer justifies this by saying a previous sale fell through or the extra money is needed to pay for shipping expenses or customs fees. The reality is, the cashier's check is bogus, but it can take some time to find this out.

The buyer then asks the seller to wire the difference either to him or to the shipping company to cover expenses. Or a buyer sends a cashier's check as a down payment, then decides to back out of the deal and asks for the money back.

When asked to wire money, just say no. It's never a good idea to wire money to someone you don't know because it's an untraceable transaction.

Stop negotiating with anyone who proposes this kind of arrangement.



Hello,
Thanks for the email. I am interested and would be willing to buy it at that price (\$3,500). I have an International shipping agent that will come pick it up from your (HOUSE) and ship to me. I will arrange for payment by sending your full name, address, state, city, ZIP code, country, telephone no./mobile no to my client in the states who is owing me the amount of (\$8,000) to issue you a check for this amount, which is a refund for a cancelled order I placed with him, and being a refund the amount can only be written on a single check. I know it is more than the (car) price but after getting the check, I need you to cash it and deduct cost of the (car), then do me a favor of wiring the remaining balance to my international shipper via Western Union. I will also compensate you with (\$50) for removing from the net. It is

Phony Escrow Services

Escrow services serve as middlemen between buyers and sellers. They collect payments from buyers, wait until the buyers collect and approve the purchases, and then send the money to the sellers.

The internet is littered with bogus escrow sites, so make sure you use a licensed, reputable service. Cars.com recommends Escrow.com (siy.cars.com/escrow).

Never blindly accept an escrow service proposed by a buyer. If a buyer insists on using a service other than Escrow.com (siy.cars.com/escrow), find a new buyer.



▶ Meeting a Prospective Buyer for a Test Drive

Few people would buy a car from a dealer without test-driving it first, and the same is true when dealing with a private-party seller.

It may seem odd to hand your keys to a stranger, but the process should run smoothly if you follow these tips:

- It's best to meet potential buyers somewhere other than at your home. When possible, bring along a friend for peace of mind, and make sure family or friends know of your plans.
- You should accompany prospective buyers on the test drive. This is crucial; it gives you more selling time, and it spares you the distress of watching a stranger drive away in your car. When riding along, point out all the features you love about your car, including things you didn't have room to mention in your ad. You've got a captive audience — make the most of your time.
- Pre-plan a general route that allows the buyer to experience a variety of driving situations during the test drive. Give the buyer the opportunity to drive on the highway and in local traffic.
- Liability insurance coverage shouldn't be an issue. Many insurance policies cover other people who drive your car so long as they're doing so with your permission and have a valid driver's license. Verify your policy's details; if it doesn't offer this protection, ask to see proof of the buyer's insurance. Make sure the driver has full coverage, which includes collision, liability and comprehensive.

Before the Test Drive

If the buyer makes a special request to go it alone — and you feel comfortable with that — write down his or her driver's license number. Set a time limit on the test drive, and exchange cell phone numbers. Also, confirm that the driver's license information meshes with what you were told when you first made contact.

► Securing Safe Payment

Whether you're dealing with a buyer in person, via email or over the telephone, always be careful when accepting payment.

Remember these steps to make yourself less vulnerable:

- Never wire money to a potential buyer under any circumstances. If a buyer pays via a check or money order, accept only the exact amount of the sales price.
- Confirm with the issuing bank that the check is valid. Look up contact information for the bank on your own, as a forged check likely will include a phony bank address and phone number.
- When possible, go to the bank with the buyer to verify the check's authenticity. In addition, it's a good idea to request a cashier's check drawn from a local branch.
- Stick to your timeline and don't rush the transaction. If the bank is closed when the buyer wants to pay you, hold off until you can verify the check's validity. If possible, wait until the check clears the bank before handing over ownership of the vehicle. How long that takes will depend on your bank, but it should be less than a week.
- If the buyer chooses to pay by money order, follow the safe-payment guidelines for accepting checks. Verify the name and amount with the issuing bank, and request a money order from a local bank whenever possible.
- If those methods leave you feeling squeamish, there's always cold, hard cash. Just make sure both parties sign a cash receipt, such as the bill of sale found in cars.com's Selling Tools. Your best bet, however, may be Escrow.com ([siy.cars.com/escrow](https://www.siy.cars.com/escrow)). It's legitimate and offers equal protection for buyers and sellers. For complete safety and security, Escrow.com is the way to go.

Verify the Purchaser's Identity

In any transaction, it's important to verify the purchaser's identity.

Ask to see a driver's license, and write down his or her driver's license number.

Also, make sure the name and address on the license match what you've been told previously. If they don't, inquire.

▶ Transferring Ownership

Transferring ownership to the buyer is easy, but details vary by state.

We list a few guidelines regarding this part of the transaction, but check with your local Department of Motor Vehicles for location-specific details:



- Before potential buyers take their first look at your car, make sure you have the title in your possession — provided the car is paid off. You'll need to sign this over to the new owner. If you don't know where your title is or how to obtain one, see **Prepping Your Car for Sale** (p. 3).
- Check with your local Department of Motor Vehicles (siy.cars.com/dmv) for details.
- To avoid future liability, notify the DMV that you sold your car. States have different mechanisms for gathering this information — some require you to file a notice of sale after you've signed over the title to the new owner. Make sure you research your local requirements completely and fulfill every condition.
- It's a good idea to fill out a bill of sale, which is included in cars.com's Selling Tools, even though it doesn't legally transfer ownership. Some states make this a requirement. A bill of sale lists the car's vehicle identification number, a description of the car, the date of sale, the purchase price, and the names and signatures of both parties in the transaction.
- Make copies of all paperwork.

▶ Turning Over Your Car to the Buyer

**You decided to post an ad and you found a buyer
— now it's time to say goodbye to your car.**

Here are a few last-minute reminders:

- Don't jump the gun; make sure the sale is secure. If you accepted payment via a cashier's check, follow the steps in the **Securing Safe Payment** section (p. 9) to ensure it's valid before you sign over the title. If you used an escrow service, wait until it tells you that payment has been received.
- If you're dealing with an out-of-town buyer, arrange for that person to pick up the vehicle, or consider employing a professional delivery service. Delivery services transport vehicles on large hauling trucks. Prices vary depending on the length of the transport and the vehicle's weight. The cost usually starts at about \$500. Work out the cost and payment issues with the buyer first. Cars.com recommends Dependable Auto Shippers (siy.cars.com/shipping) — call 800-763-4125 to receive a free quote.
- In most states, the license plates stay with the seller, not the car. If the plates remain with the original owner, remove them so you don't retain a legal tie to the car. If the plates stay with the car, you need to fill out the proper paperwork at the Department of Motor Vehicles (siy.cars.com/dmv) so the plates transfer to the new owner.
- Call your insurance company and have the vehicle removed from your policy.
- As long as you were forthright with information about your car in the selling process, you shouldn't be liable for anything once the sale is complete. In most states, the law assumes that private-party sales carry "as is" status. Still, it doesn't hurt to get that understanding in writing. Have both parties sign off before the transaction is complete. Cars.com's bill of sale includes this language.

