



Five Steps to Stress-Free Car Buying

Step 1: BUDGET

Keep things real. Be honest with yourself (and your income). How much can you afford? Keep in mind that buying a car is more than just making a monthly car payment. Operating a car requires additional expenses: gas, insurance, registration fees, tires, oil changes, and more. Determine the total amount you have to spend monthly for ALL your vehicle expenses.

Step 2: RESEARCH

What makes and models will fit the budget? Make a list of the features that matter most to you: safety ratings, gas mileage, Bluetooth, or typical maintenance expenses. Use sites like **kbb.com**, **nadaguides.com**, **cars.com**, and **edmunds.com** to learn all about the makes and models you are considering. Use comparison tools on these sites to make selecting the right car easier. Knowing what you plan to buy **before you shop** reduces the stress of visiting the dealership.

Step 3: PRE-APPROVAL

Haggling with car dealers over price can be stressful. It's hard to know whether you are paying too much, or even whether you need all the available options. The dealer tells you not to worry, they can finance the whole deal for you. But, before you know it, the vehicle you researched on line at a cost of \$18,000 is going to cost you almost \$30,000. Instead, go see your local credit union **before you shop** to get pre-approved financing. Tell the credit union what your total monthly car ownership budget is. You can trust the credit union to approve you for a loan you can afford. With pre-approved financing, based on your car-buying budget, you can negotiate with confidence a great price for the car of your choice, without stressing over whether you are spending too much, or if you can really afford the monthly payments.

Step 4: TEST DRIVE

Time to buy. Check out various dealerships online to see what's in stock. Be sure to have several selections lined up. A car that looks like a great deal online can turn out to be less than you expected when you get to the dealership. And, the really good deals go fast. Your first selection might already be sold! **TEST DRIVE** to be sure the vehicle runs as good as it looks! But don't feel pressured to buy a vehicle just because you took it for a test drive. Take time to think through your options. Make certain your choice really does meet all, or at least most, of your requirements – especially your budget!

Step 5: BUY

Ask the dealer for a Purchase Agreement or Buyer's Order, then return to your credit union to finalize your loan. Take the stress out of repaying your loan. Consider using an auto pay option to assure every monthly payment is made on time.

That's the whole car-buying process! If you still have questions, or have additional concerns, contact the CSCU loan department at 936.295.3980. We love to help members buy cars, trucks, and SUVs. And, with us, it's personal!