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# How To Buy a Sports Car

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# How To Buy a Sports Car

## What is a Sports Car?

As a simple matter of definition, a sports car is generally thought to be a small low car with a high-powered engine that generally seats two persons. This “textbook” definition gives us an idea of what a sports car is, but there are differing perspectives.

Even a more complete dictionary definition falls short of truly capturing a sports car. The Houghton Mifflin dictionary defines a sports car as: “An automobile equipped for racing, especially an aerodynamically shaped one-passenger or two-passenger vehicle having a low center of gravity and steering and suspension designed for precise control at high speeds.”

Examining the textbook and dictionary definitions, we can find any number of exceptions to the proverbial rule. Earlier British sports cars lacked powerful engines and many small cars with powerful engines that are popularly considered sports were not designed with racing, per se, in mind.

Additionally, the “two seat rule” seems outmoded. Many sports cars today offer small back seats (sometimes referred to as 2+2 seating) and there is a current movement underway to increase the seating room in models long considered sports cars by most automotive experts.

Insurance companies use their own formulae in classifying automobiles and often the presence of two doors automatically makes any car a “sports car” in their eyes. This perspective, of course, is as overly simplistic as the standard dictionary approach to defining a sports car. One can certainly think of any number of two door vehicles that fall far short of being an actual sports car. Economy cars and even larger two-door vehicles that are not built with power and performance in mind should not qualify as true sports cars.

Often, car buffs will refer to high-performance muscle cars and other larger vehicles as sports cars. Others, however, draw a distinction between these vehicles and “true” sports cars. These individuals will claim that a car can be a “sporting car” or simply “sporty” but still fall short of being a true sports car. Thus, “regular” cars may be outfitted with a “sports package” and/or accessories to make the car sportier, but may not fit a strict definition of a sports car.

Not all automotive enthusiasts, however, embrace this restrictive view of sports cars. In many circles, a sports car is any car offering greater performance or power than more standard offerings. This school of thought will consider muscle cars and other larger vehicles designed with performance in mind as sports cars.

Others will maintain that the distinction between a sports car and any other type of car lies in how the car’s suspension and handling are addressed. Technical debates rage over whether various suspension packages qualify as belonging to true “sports cars.”

Some will argue that a sports car can be defined by its intentions. If the car is designed for performance more so than for utility, they say, it is a sports car. This intent-based definition, however, provides little guidance in determining whether a car is a sports car or not. Particularly in the modern era, the notion of designing a car of any sort without significant consideration of its feasibility and utility seems unlikely. Any commercially viable vehicle, regardless of its performance, must retain significant utility.

Road and Track, a leading automotive publication, summarizes the sports car definition debate with a simple observation: "Ask five people the exact definition of a sports car, and you'll likely get five different answers."

There is no clear-cut definition of what really is a sports car. The restrictive definitions of the past seem ill suited to categorize today's diverse automotive offerings and common usage of the term runs contrary to most long-held definitions.

There is, however, a strand of thought that seems to run through almost all of the outlooks on the meaning of "sports car." If a car is designed with high performance or race-like capabilities in mind, it can probably be safely termed a sports car. Some purists may balk at such a liberal perspective, but alternative definitions fall far short of accurately distinguishing sports cars from regular production models.

### **Which Cars Are Sports Cars?**

Ask anyone what a sports car is and they will probably invent an answer. Ask a dozen different people the same question and they will probably provide a dozen different answers. There are a variety of ways to define what constitutes an actual sports car. With no standardized definition available within the industry, the term "sports car" is without certain meaning.

Originally, it was easy to differentiate between a sports car and a regular production automobile. If a regular person could buy it, it wasn't a sports car. Sports cars were toys for the extremely rich and automobile-obsessed. They are also used primarily in situations that represented a radical departure from conventional driving. Road races, rallies and other competitions were the home of the sports car as manufacturers and designers went head to head, testing their newest technological advances and inventive ideas.

These sports cars were almost always designed for a single driver and no additional passengers. Occasionally a "co-pilots" seat might have been added. The notion of a backseat made little sense considering the purposes for which the cars were being used. They tended to be extremely small and exceptionally faster than most regularly produced cars.

This historical moment gave birth to a notion of the sports car that survives today among many automotive enthusiasts. These traditionalists will consider a car a sports car only if it is a two-seater and designed for racing.

This perspective was antiquated somewhat by the post-war experience in the United States and elsewhere. Cars based upon the test car technologies began to make their way into the

garages of the public. With a more mainstream audience, some changes were made to the traditional sports car, including the frequent addition of a small back seat.

As time passed, sports cars slowly grew and the technologies pioneered by sports cars found their way into vehicles, which were not undersized or built for racing.

In the 1960s, John Delorean decided to drop a large V8 into a Pontiac Tempest. His new invention, the GTO, ushered in the muscle car era. Purists might argue the American muscle cars were not sports cars, but simply cars making use of sports car refinements. The distinction however, began to become lost in regular conversation and "sports car" began to refer to any fast or high-performance vehicle.

The line becomes increasingly blurred with every year. Traditional sports cars are becoming increasingly rare as automakers recognize a need to maintain some level of functionality if they are to entice buyers. The innovations spurred by traditional sports cars are being adopted into vehicles of every size and shape. While traditional racing style sports cars are maintained in many product lines and though some boutique manufacturers still focus their efforts on small high-speed cars, it is impossible to ignore the "crossover" appeal of many traditional sports car features.

Some may say there are sports cars, sporty cars and sporting cars and that they are all different things. To the average person, however, they blend into one.

Which cars are sports cars? Today, it's hard to tell. You can be a hardliner and say only the racing-based two-seaters qualify, or you can be liberal in your interpretation and proclaim all high-performance vehicles sports cars. Either way, you'd probably be right.

### **Winning the War at Home: Buying a Sports Car**

So, you're going to buy a new car. And you have already decided you will buy a sports car. The only problem is that you are going to have to justify that purchase to your wife or significant other. Let's be honest, if you come home with a new 4-door sedan on car-buying day, you'd get a hug and some compliments on your wisdom from your wife. If you scream into the driveway in a cherry red ragtop, you're going to get something else altogether.

Many men will argue that women just don't understand the male attraction to the sports car. Nothing could be more wrong. They understand it all too well. That's why it's so hard to convince them to assent to your decision to buy that shiny two-seater. They understand your juvenile motivations and just aren't convinced they warrant a significant investment of your marital assets.

Don't give up hope, however. If you are committed to buying a sports car and the one real impediment is your wife's contrary opinion, you might still have a chance at driving around town and impressing everyone who sees you. You're going to have to persuade her that your sports car purchase is something other than a pathetic grasp back at your youth or some way to make you feel better about whatever inadequacies you might subconsciously believe you have.

I said, don't give up hope. I know the idea of actually changing your wife's viewpoint seems very unlikely, but it is possible. It does happen. Look around; occasionally you will see a guy driving the car of your dreams who is still happily married. Sometimes their wife is even in the passenger seat. They had to have something working for them right? Well, here it is, your secret weapon in the Great Debate over your sports cars...Three solid indisputable reasons why buying a sports car makes perfect sense:

### **Investment**

Wives love financial stability. They like the idea of financial stability as much as we like the idea of losing it all at the poker table, finding a dollar in the parking lot and building it back up to a profit. Whereas we like financial risk, they feed at the trough of responsible investment. Luckily, a well-chosen sports car can be a superb investment.

Newer models may not always fit the investment bill, but classics do. You can point out the consistent value increases in classic sports cars and demonstrate that today's \$30,000 purchase may eventually be your toddler's college fund. Oh, yes, mention a college fund. Trust me, she'll like that one a lot.

### **Safety**

I know, this seems like a long shot and probably runs contrary to everything you have ever heard but there is a solid argument to be made here. Sports cars boast spectacular maneuverability and handling. If you drive in traffic, you have a great chance of being able to avoid an otherwise unavoidable accident in a top-notch sports car. She will resist this argument and will probably try to counter it with common sense and maybe even research. If this happens, rely on this sample anecdote. It's a true story; happened to me a few years ago. Just say it happened to a friend of yours.

I was driving down the interstate in the left lane with a large semi-truck with two trailers on my right side. I was passing, but was not blazing down the highway. Right about the time I was alongside the middle of the trailer attached to the cab of the truck, the driver decided he needed into the left lane. I didn't have time to accelerate around him. I didn't have time to slow down and let him past completely. I had to duck off onto the medium at a pretty good rate of speed.

It was a bumpy ride, but I felt pretty secure until I noticed that big bump. You know, the little spot where the highway patrolmen can turnaround. If you approach it while sailing down the median, it acts as a ramp. I hit the ramp at highway speeds and flew through the sky, landing after about thirty yards of flight.

I was able to successfully negotiate the landing and stop the car without injury or incident. If I were driving the family station wagon, I would have been toast. The Porsche saved me. It's superior handling was the only thing standing between the End and me.

Seriously, use that one.

## **Status**

This is a tricky card to play, but you can get some positive results if you do it right. Women like status. They deny it, but they do. Don't believe me? Stop mowing your lawn for a few weeks this summer. She won't tell you the lawn looks bad. She might, actually, but if she does it will be done in reference to other lawns. "Honey, our lawn is horrible, look at the Smiths' yard. It's so nice. You must mow today." You know the drill.

Well, if your chunk of suburbia is like mine, it's lined with boring cars resembling those owned by your grandparents and a slew of look-alike SUV's. If you can get her to imagine, just for a moment the status benefits of having the one hot sports car on the block and just what that will communicate to your rat-racing neighbors, you have an outside shot at selling her on the whole thing.

You've made a decision. You are going to buy that sports car. It may not be the best decision ever in terms of marital bliss, but it's your decision and you are going to stick with it until the bitter end. You might as well try to make the whole process run smoothly.

OK, so the smiling wife next to that guy you saw in the sporty convertible the other day wasn't really his wife. And sure, a nice safe money market account is probably more to your wife's liking than automobile investment. Yes, the safety thing may be a tough sell, too. But you have to take what you can get and it's always better to enter an argument with something to say in your own defense. You need to do whatever you can to make sure your last happy moment isn't the split-second before you shut off the ignition when you drive home.

## **5 Reasons to Purchase a Sports Car**

In a car culture dominated by SUV's, family sedans and economy cars, sports cars stand out in the crowd. There are a variety of selling points for all types of automobiles, but sports cars are uniquely attractive for at least five reasons.

### **Driving Quality**

Whereas other automobile types are designed with function and affordability in mind, sports cars are focused on performance. The quality of a sports car driving experience is unparalleled. Drivers are able to hug turns, accelerate quickly when necessary and have a level of driving control not offered by the larger vehicles with whom they share the road.

If you, as a driver, are concerned with the quality of your driving experience, there is no real alternative to a true sports car. Designed with the most discriminating drivers in mind, sports cars trump the performance of other vehicles easily. One need only take a spin in an oversized SUV and compare it to the driving experience they find in a quality sports car to understand the significant difference.

## **Beauty**

Appearance may not be the chief reason to make an automotive investment, but when confronted with today's highways littered with cookie-cutter cars, a discriminating buyer can find an escape with a beautifully designed sports car.

Function can be important, but there is room even in the utilitarian world of automobiles to seek out something more aesthetically pleasing. We often spend a great deal of time in and around cars. Those who want to spend that time in the company of good design are likely to find the sleek lines and measured appearance of sports cars a welcome respite from the dull boxes on wheels so many people choose to use for transportation.

## **Residual Value**

Every new car depreciates the second the ignition key is turned, but some cars are better at holding their value than others. A scant few may actually become more valuable with the passage of time. Sports cars, due to their aforementioned beauty and quality are more likely to become future classics and strong value-holders than many other automobiles.

Take a quick glance through the classified advertisements. Which older cars are still demanding a strong price? You are sure to notice that economy cars and generic pickup trucks are fetching far less than high-performance sports cars. And consider the classic cars for which collectors now yearn. How many enthusiasts are searching for old Chryslers? By comparison, how many would be interested in a vintage Corvette? Sports cars have a much greater potential of becoming coveted possessions.

## **Individual Expression**

Every purchase says something about the buyer. Someone who wants to blend into the crowd is likely to purchase an automobile that blends into traffic. There are those, however, who want to take each and every opportunity to express their individuality. Sports cars make up a relatively small percentage of the cars on the road. Sports car ownership thus gives one an opportunity to distinguish themselves from the crowd.

One need not turn their automobile choice into a statement. But the opportunity to do so is there if one desires. Sports car ownership makes a statement of individuality and displays a desire to stand out where others seek only to blend in.

## **Fun**

There are intangible benefits to sports car ownership that difficult to qualify or quantify. Chief among these is the pure entertainment and fun one can have with their sports car. One can talk about hugging a curve without taking their foot off the gas or zipping through slow traffic while remaining in complete control. One can discuss the feeling of satisfaction they take from knowing they are operating a true example of great engineering. These various observations and explanations all add up to the almost inexplicable fun inherent in sports car driving.

Sports cars are iconic. They have a mystique. That mystique is impossible to totally define or

pigeonhole, but it exists. Its existence is born out again and again as top designers fret over the smallest details and accomplished drivers relish the opportunity to test the latest models. Sports car ownership is, at its core, fun.

There is undoubtedly a litany of justifications for purchasing an economy car. SUV owners certainly have a logical explanation for their purchases. None of the utilitarian laundry lists favoring other models, however, can be quite as compelling as the reasons to buy a sports car.

## **Buying A Sports Car: Four Rules to Observe**

When purchasing a new sports car, one should keep in mind 4 simple rules.

### **Be Well-Researched**

Don't enter the buying process without a solid understand of exactly what you are after and how much you should expect to pay. Sports cars can be expensive investments and it is not advisable to handle the buying process impulsively.

One can conduct extensive pre-purchase research via the Internet, automobile magazines and by comparing models and prices at various dealers. In today's information-rich society, there is no good excuse for not being a well-informed consumer.

### **Be Clear on Financing**

When buying a car, be sure to question the seller thoroughly on financing options and the exact terms to which you are agreeing. If you are not entirely certain of a term or condition, don't hesitate to seek clarification.

If possible, enter the dealership with pre-approved financing from a lender with whom you are comfortable. This will allow you to negotiate from a position of strength and to assess a deal with a clear outlook on the true cost to you.

### **Understand the Salesperson's Motivations**

Dealership sales staffs consist of professionals whose primary interest is moving inventory. Although a salesperson can provide important information and help you in your sports car search, one should remember they are not always working toward the consumers' best interests. They may try to sell you an automobile they like--or one that brings with a greater commission than a superior alternative.

One should, therefore, approach any salesperson with some healthy skepticism. You need not approach the salesperson as a mortal enemy, but you must always remember their reasons for selling you a particular sports car may not line up with your own best interests.

## **Hunt for Bargains**

Savvy buyers know that end of the year models can offer great savings if one is not preoccupied with owning the very latest model of a sports car. They'll also know which dealers are offering great promotions and deals.

A smart sports car buyer's research will allow him or her to make quality decisions and avoid rash choices. A commitment to searching out the best bargain for the car you want is almost always worth the extra time and effort required.

There are a variety of factors that go into an enriching sports car purchase. Keeping these simple guidelines in mind will certainly go a long way toward making your purchase a success.

## **Don't Be Afraid to Ask the Experts!**

Owning and maintaining a sports car can be a rewarding experience. It can also be a trying and frustrating process, as a sports car owner may confront any number of difficult issues.

There may be questions about insurance coverage, automobile protection, driving techniques, repair processes, maintenance requirements and a host of other issues. With so many concerns, some sports car owners may feel overwhelmed by it all.

Fortunately, sports car owners need not tackle these issues alone. The sports car community is welcoming, and there are a variety of available resources that can take some of the pressure out of owning and maintaining a high-performance vehicle.

Sports car clubs and organizations are an excellent resource for the new sports car owner. Populated by experts and enthusiasts, these clubs are veritable clearinghouses of information about automobiles. Members are enthusiastic fans of the cars they own and are generally more than happy to share any ideas, hints or information they may have for another like-minded owner.

Mechanics in your own community are another tremendous resource. Drivers have a tendency to view mechanics the same way a candy-eater views the dentist: they are seen as an undesirable last resort. It need not be this way. Mechanics possess tremendous amounts of expertise and experience that can help a new sports car owner. Mechanics tend to be car fanatics--after all, they have chosen to spend their professional life repairing vehicles--and are apt to be willing to converse on any number of issues facing a sports car owner.

Dealerships are also a potential source of top-notch information and ideas. Automobile dealerships are fond of developing a repeat customer base and will often provide whatever assistance they can to a former customer in hopes of securing their future business. Salespeople and on-site service staff may be very well versed in the details of your particular car and may be able to provide information you might not find anywhere else.

If you feel more comfortable with a less personal exchange, the Internet is rife with sports car enthusiasts and owners who may be willing to impart wisdom to a new sports car owner. Forums and message boards focusing on virtually every kind of sports car dot the Internet and these sites can be an excellent source of information and camaraderie. Registration at most forums is free and immediately opens one to the perspectives and opinions of other drivers from all over the globe.

Plunging into the world of sports cars can be quite intimidating. There will probably be more questions than answers for new sports car owners, as new problems and challenges are frequently confronted. Fortunately, there are sources that can begin to answer some of those questions and that can supply sports car owners with the tools to learn other answers all on their own.

You need not fear the unknown when it comes to sports car ownership. There are plenty of others out there who have been through the process themselves once before or who are currently wrestling with the same questions. Simply extending oneself to other motor sports enthusiasts can be a great way to demystify the experience of owning a sports car.

### **Choosing Your Sports Car's Color**

If you are buying a new sports car, you may have the opportunity to select its cover from the ever-growing palette provided by auto manufacturers. When selecting a color for your sports car, there are a few factors one should consider.

Individuality may be more of a concern for some than it is for others. If one is seeking an original, or individual look for their sports car, they may be interested in the results of the annual DuPont car color survey. Every year, the survey examines each class of passenger automobiles and finds out which colors are most commonly chosen by consumers.

Based on the results of the DuPont survey, you should avoid a silver paint job if you are trying to stand out in a crowd. Silver has been the most popular color for sports cars each of the last two years and one out of every five sports cars purchased is silver. Those seeking a unique look may also want to think twice about going with red, blue or black color schemes. These three hues were the next most commonly used colors. In comparison, the number of yellow sports cars and green sports cars combined would still only equal approximately half of those sold with a red paint job.

There are few things that are researched as much as consumer habits. Not only are popular colors evaluated by research teams, they have also examined resale values for cars of different colors. Paint schemes that are particularly unique, it appears, are harder to sell used. Of course, this is not surprising. Thus, if you are preoccupied with eventual resale concerns, you might want to pick one of the more popular colors so the sports car will appeal to more prospective buyers.

If you plan on driving the sports car as a primary vehicle or with great regularity, you should consider your environment and usage habits when picking a color. For instance, one who must

access a dirt road regularly should probably reconsider a desire for white or similar light hues. Alternatively, a light color might be perfect for someone living in a sunny climate and is more concerned about heat retention and paint fading than with showing a little dust.

When determining which color best suits you and your sports car, there is one factor you should not take into consideration. There is a venerable urban legend that claims car insurance is pegged at higher rates for those driving red cars.

Proponents of this myth claim the insurance companies determined those who drove red cars were more prone to accidents and they accordingly increased rates. Today, there is absolutely no evidence to support the "red paint insurance" story. So, don't let the fear of a higher insurance premium dissuade you from buying a candy apple red sports car if that is your desire.

One should, however, consider the available interior packages when picking out their paint color. Generally, a dealer will recommend a complimentary color scheme, but many of us have seen cars with interior/exterior color combinations that were anything but flattering.

Don't neglect to consider the look of the interior and the exterior together. Will the red paint really compliment the gray interior or neutral brown interior better? Make sure you put together a combination you will enjoy.

One of the great things about buying a new sports car today is the flexibility it affords you. Gone are the days of cookie-cutter cars with few options and limited paint schemes. Today, you can assemble your car to your custom specifications, including the paint job. When picking your color, be thorough in your thinking and you are likely to end up with the perfect sports car.

## **Five Tips for Buying a Sports Car**

Buying a sports car can be an intimidating process. Automobiles can be significant investments, and the sports car market can be complicated and overwhelming. Anyone planning to purchase a sports car should keep these X tips in mind throughout the process.

### **Research the Market**

A prospective buyer should investigate the prices being asked for the cars in which they are interested. Local newspaper ads, as well as an Internet sites can provide you with a good way to determine prevailing asking prices. Internet research can supply you with information regarding the asking price for similar cars throughout the world. This information will help you decide what a sports car is worth and what drivers in other areas of the world are paying for the vehicle.

### **Patience is a Virtue**

Do not negotiate with sellers until you are ready to buy, and avoid being pressured into making a decision right away.

This also means you should avoid pretending to be an immediate buyer when dealing with salespeople. Feigning immediate interest is not a good practice as the salespeople will not know if or when they should take you seriously. If you later return to a salesperson, they may not show you adequate attention or interest if you have "played games" with them before.

When feeling out the market, one should also wait to discuss the price one is willing to pay. Providing a salesperson with a specific price range while investigating the market is a feeding tool the sales person can use to get an idea of how much they may be able to push a price upward. This also gives them an opportunity to direct your attention to specific vehicles that may or may not meet your expectations. While being patient, discuss price in broad terms and avoid excessive specificity.

### **Negotiate Wisely: Use the Telephone**

When you feel you understand the market and have pinpointed potential sports cars in which you have a strong interest, you will need to begin the negotiation process. One should enter this critical aspect of sports car purchasing with an awareness of good negotiating technique.

One should strive to negotiate via telephone instead of dealing with sales staff face-to-face. In-person negotiation puts the buyer on the salesperson's home territory, giving them a greater degree of comfort and advantage. For instance, face-to-face negotiation allows salespeople to "work in packs," approaching the customer from multiple angles simultaneously, potentially clouding key purchase issues.

At the dealership, salespeople can also use "tricks of the trade" such as checking for "management approval" in another room, creating pressure opportunities. Pressure can be a salesperson's greatest asset, and accessing them by telephone leaves you in a less restricted position. Remember, sports car salespeople are talented professionals. If you are in their presence, you can expect sales pressure to be exerted in any number of ways--some of which you may have never expected.

If you are dealing with them on the telephone, they have to talk to you, are less able to play games with you, and are less able to effectively use emotional ploys. You cannot be passed from one salesperson to. Telephone negotiations allow you to have critical information right in front of you and allow you to take time to discuss your automobile purchase with other trusted sources before sealing the deal.

### **Retain Your Power**

Often sports car buyers feel like sellers have the upper hand. This feeling of powerlessness can lead to poor decisions during the buying process. One must remember that, as the consumer, they are in a powerful bargaining position.

Early research allows a sports car buyer to understand competing prices and to use this information to move sellers into lower costs. An informed potential buyer should feel comfortable using their research and understanding of the sports car market to their advantage.

At some point in price negotiations, a sales person will provide what is clearly a final price. At this point, the prospective buyer still needs to retain their bargaining clout. Ask the salesperson to unbundled the price of the extended warranty and compare that to the original price. Ask if there are financing options that can further reduce the car's price. The smart sports car buyer must continue to keep his or her own best interests in mind.

### **Be a Reasonable Person**

Even though a smart buyer will be tenacious and well informed, it is necessary to retain a level of civility and politeness in sports car price negotiations. The staff at the dealership may be an important ally if your car subsequently needs repairs. A good relationship with a sports car dealership can also be of great benefit for future purchases.

So, even though one must be a strong negotiator, it is not necessary to push salespeople too far or to engage in inappropriate argument. Haggling for a great price is perfectly acceptable, but it should always be done in a professional manner.

Remember, these five tips can make the often-difficult sports car buying process easier for any buyer.

## **Purchasing a Used Sports Car: Research and Investigation**

You may be interested in purchasing a used sports car, but may have concerns associated with the deal. A new car purchase, after all, includes warranties and assurances that reduce your need to be concerned with potential later problems. Additionally, a never-used car cannot suffer from any past damage or misuse.

New cars are wonderful, of course, but there is something special about older models. In the sports car realm, many older automobiles are very coveted collectible items and have surprising value. Sports car aficionados recognize quality and seek to preserve it.

Although one can never be sure they will pick a winner and not a lemon, there is a two-pronged approach that should be followed: Research and Investigation. Research refers to gathering background information on the vehicle make and mode. Investigation refers to carefully evaluating the automobile itself.

### **Research**

Research the car in question. Research it thoroughly. Yes, consult the Blue Book and determine its estimated value, but don't stop there. Find out what kind of problems the car in question most often experiences. Find out what telltale signs of problems might be evidenced in a used version. Learn the car inside and out before making the deal.

You can perform this research at the library, via the Internet, by discussing the matter with experts and experienced professionals or through any other number of potential means. Your research methodology is not as important as your research results. You need to know what to

look for and what the car is probably worth before making an offer.

Make notes and formulate a checklist of things you will want to investigate on the car you are considering. Take your notes with you along with any questions you might have for the owner that have been spurred by your research.

## **Investigate**

Knowing about the car in general terms is essential. Your research has provided you with a great overall perspective on the make and model you are evaluating and you have an idea of what to look for. Now, it is time to take the next step and investigate the car being sold.

Ask to see service records. If you are very interested, invest in obtaining a CarFax or similar vehicle history report. Find out everything you can about the car you might be buying.

Your investigation is not just a matter of pushing papers, however. Now is the time to put your knowledge to work. Physically inspect the car closely, noting deficiencies that will require repair work, and paying close attention to any areas your earlier research indicated might be troublesome. When test-driving the car, keep your mind on specific issues and problems you know to be common or possible with the car.

Don't rely on your own investigation alone. Get a second opinion. Find a mechanic who specializes in working with the type of car you are considering and take the car to them for an inspection if it passes your initial check. The seller should be happy to let you do this. If he or she is not, that should be considered a warning that all might not be well with the car. A mechanic may or may not charge for a once-over on the auto. However, if there is a nominal charge involved it will be well worth the expense if it helps you avoid a horrible purchase.

If your research indicates it is a sports car with which you could be happy and your investigation shows it is free of visible problems, the buying process can proceed. It's at this point that one begins to discuss price. If your research implies this may not be the right kind of sports car for you and/or your investigation shows problems with the vehicles that are in excess of your willingness to undertake repairs, you should not buy the car.

If your research and investigation lead you to avoid a car, it will seem as if you learned a great deal for very little. In reality, however, your effort not only increased your knowledge base for future car shopping but also may have saved you from a nightmarish investment.

When considering a used car purchase, always be sure to emphasize both research and investigation.

## **Replicars: Building Your Own Sports Car**

Many sports car fans have gone into production! That's right, they have built their own sports cars--often to resemble some of the most rare and valuable sports cars in history. These replicar owners are kit car builders who go out of their way to make high-quality replicas of the

real thing.

Among the most popular home-built replica cars are Cobras. The finished products often look indistinguishable from their original counterparts.

Building your own replicar can have a lot of appeal. It may be a way to obtain the dream car one otherwise never afford. It may also be a family project or the extension of mechanical interests. After all, the process must certainly appear exciting to any would-be mechanic who loves to tinker with a car. Replicars allow one to actually build your sports car from the ground up using kit body and other parts, usually along with a commonly available mainstream automotive base.

Those who build their own sports cars seem to develop a greater appreciation for the vehicle and a strong understanding of both its limitations and strengths. Replicars really elevate the sports car hobby to a different level--every owner becomes a manufacturer with a more vested interest in the success and quality of each vehicle.

There is an active community of replicar builders and fans. This allows tremendous networking opportunities and a great information resource for what can most definitely become a complicated hobby. Members share information about building kit cars and often have get-togethers, swap meets and rallies where they can find interesting parts and grab new ideas for modifying their homemade cars.

Replicar drivers undoubtedly turn some heads in their "classic" cars, but have a great story to tell those interested, too. It's a different way of acquiring a sports car, but one that replicar enthusiasts probably wouldn't trade for anything.

One can find a sports car they love, purchase it, drive it home and enjoy it for years. There is nothing wrong in that traditional model. There is an alternative, however, for those who want to be more actively involved in the construction of their car than those who simply choose a paint color and option practice. Kit car and replicar enthusiasts truly wring the most out of their sports car hobby by playing the roles of both end-user and manufacturer.

### **Should Your Next Sports Car be a Convertible?**

For many of us, the very thought of a sports car conjures up a convertible top vehicle. We might think of a sports car as our opportunity to drive in perfect weather, top down, feeling a part of nature and closer to the driving experience.

Of course, not all convertibles are sports cars and not all sports cars are convertibles.

When one is considering the purchase of a sports car, they need to determine whether or not a convertible best suits their needs, regardless of their almost innate desire to experience the so-called open road. There are a variety of factors one should consider when deciding whether to buy a conventional hardtop vehicle or a convertible model.

Insurance costs are generally higher for a convertible. Convertibles are, initially, more attractive to thieves as their sliceable soft tops make entry a cinch. Also, whether we like to think about such things or not, there is a greater risk for serious driver and passenger injury in a collision while driving a sports car with a convertible top. This also drives up insurance costs. The hardtop shell provides an important layer of protection in many accident situations and one must consider both the reduced safety and high insurance costs associated with purchasing a topless model.

Weather is also a factor that must be considered. If one purchases a sports car, they need to have an idea of how much they would like to drive it. Some want to use their sports car as everyday transportation, others would be satisfied with a few summer romps every year. If you'd like to get fairly regular use out of your sports car, you should probably avoid the purchase of a convertible unless you live and drive in a fairly temperate climate.

Of course, one can drive with their convertible top up during inclement weather, but convertible tops are generally not as well insulated as regular car tops making them less comfortable in colder weather. Additionally, the additional costs associated with convertibles (i.e. insurance) may not be justified if you are only able to go "top down" a few months out of every year.

One should also consider the greater risk of theft and vandalism associated with convertibles. Easy access is afforded to criminals even when the top is up and latched, making it a potentially poor fit for those living or regularly parking in areas where vandalism or theft could be a problem.

One may also want to consider "middle ground solutions." Some sports cars are available with removable hard tops, which can mitigate some of the weather-related challenges a convertible owner faces. Others may be satisfied with T-tops or a large sunroof as a compromise between an enclosed car and a convertible.

All of these factors should be balanced against one's interest in owning a convertible for aesthetic reasons. However, safety and expense analysis is not always perfectly suited for decision making. If they were, no one would drive sports cars. Instead they would opt for safe, cheaply insurable vehicles all of the time. For some sports car buffs, the idea of passing on a convertible due to cost or safety issues is unthinkable.

The compromise solutions of T-tops and sunroofs may completely lack appeal. After all, there is an almost innate desire among many drivers to experience the open road and to catch as many summer rays as possible in their sports car. For these individuals, a convertible may be the only choice in which they are interested. For the rest of us, it may pay to at least consider some of the potential issues associated with convertible sports car ownership.

## **The Most Affordable Sports Cars & How to Find Them**

Claiming any one new sports car is the most affordable is a great way to start an endless debate. Even if the list price of a particular sports car is less than its competitors, a forthcoming model is likely to sneak in at a few dollars less. Meanwhile, limiting discussion to

current models overlooks the truly most affordable sports cars--used models.

Used sports cars can be bargains, particularly older models from less glamorous manufacturers. Fiat sports cars from the 1970s, for instance, can often be found in running condition for under a few thousand dollars. Any sports club car membership will undoubtedly boast scores of stories detailing great bargains found from individual owners on classic sports cars that are more coveted by collectors, too.

If you are looking for a truly affordable sports car and are not intimidated by the prospect of the necessary maintenance issues inherent in older models, you should certainly seek out a used sports car.

There are a variety of ways to find affordable sports cars. The traditional method of looking through your local classified newspaper advertisements on a regular basis can still yield amazing values. Sellers are motivated to part with their sports cars for a variety of reasons and sometimes their needs can be immediate. This will encourage them to sell the car at prices sometimes well beneath market value. Bargain hunting via classified advertisements is a great way to stumble upon a real bargain sports car.

Mechanics can be a great source of bargain cars, too. Often, customers will leave a sports car for work at an auto shop. Once repairs are completed, they will be unable to afford the repair bill and may be forced to default the car to the shop. Mechanics acquire liens on the vehicles and are able to offer them for sale. Mechanics are experts in repairing vehicles and are primarily interested in maintaining cars--not in selling them.

A mechanic holding an abandoned vehicle still lacks payment for the work performed, too. As such, these cars can often be purchased at bargain rates. As an additional benefit, buying from a mechanic may indicate the car has had any known problems already repaired. At the very least, you will have a great source of information about the car's mechanical status--a benefit frequently missing from other bargain sources.

Internet auctions also provide an outlet for sports car bargain-hunters. The auction market is always tricky--sometimes a car may actually sell for far more than one would think it was actually worth. In other cases, there may be a window of opportunity to snag a used sports car at an amazing price. Poorly timed auctions or auctions that do not feature a highly sought after make or model of car can result in very low prices.

Of course the bargain shopper needs to enter the market well informed. Many seemingly great deals can really be busts for a buyer if they are not sufficiently educated. However, affordable sports cars are out there on the market--one need only find them.

Classified advertisements, repair shops and Internet auctions are all great opportunities to find a sports car at a bargain price. One need not resign themselves to the prospect of paying top dollar for a sports car. By choosing less popular models, or simply by hunting out great deals, a prospective buyer can save literally thousands of dollars on their sports car purchase.

## **Three Considerations for Exotic Sports Car Buyers**

In the world of sports cars, the term "exotic" refers to vehicles produced in very limited numbers, often by smaller manufacturers and super high-end vehicles created by some of the better-known car companies outside of the United States.

Many exotics are legendary. The world's fastest car, the McLaren F1, for instance is a well-known exotic. Although only around one hundred F1s were produced and the manufacturer is not a household name, the McLarens are coveted sports cars. Other exotics are also highly sought after and are often among the sports car world's most impressive status symbols.

It is easy to be seduced by the allure of owning an exotic sports car. These vehicles are often considered the pinnacle of design and are incredibly tempting cars. When the opportunity to invest in an exotic presents itself, many sports car enthusiasts have a hard time resisting the urge to purchase the vehicle.

One should, however, seek to evaluate the vehicle with a level of objectivity. There are three factors a prospective buyer must consider when evaluating an exotic sports car for purchase.

### **Expense**

Even if one can afford the asking price of an exotic, they need to be aware of the probable subsequent expenses and be sure their financial situation allows for quality ownership of the vehicle. Maintenance and repair is certain to be expensive compared to non-exotic vehicles and a buyer should attempt to discover what kind of costs he or she is likely to experience in order to keep the car in running order.

Parts, obviously, are in short supply--if they are available at all. Often the owners of exotic sports cars will need to have some parts custom-fabricated during their ownership of the vehicle. This is especially true of older exotics, some of which have been orphaned after their original manufacturer ceased to exist. This can be a painstaking and extremely expensive venture and one should make sure they are ready to add to their investment as time passes.

One cannot simply take their exotic sports car to the corner mechanic and hope that all repairs and maintenance are appropriately conducted. Specialized mechanical help will be necessary and this can involve great expense when one is not located near a suitable expert.

Too often a sports car buff will purchase an exotic, being quite able to afford the initial investment but being unprepared to handle additional future expenses. An accurate understanding of expenses and a realistic examination of one's own resources are certainly in order.

### **Reliability**

Even though an exotic sports car may represent the ultimate in performance, it does not follow that the vehicle will be eminently reliable. High-performance sports cars can be quite delicate and may necessitate regular tinkering and adjustment to stay in operating order. Exotic sports cars are known for being spectacular performers when running well but the flipside of this

phenomenon is that they are potentially among the most temperamental vehicles one may encounter.

If a buyer plans to operate their exotic regularly, it is essential to know about its level of reliability. This factor not only adds to the expenses mentioned earlier in some cases, it also can create a frustrating relationship between car and driver when an expensive investment fails to operate according to plan.

### **Drivability**

For those planning on using their exotic sports car regularly, it is important to understand that performance and drivability do not always go hand in hand. Some exotic sports cars can be "too much car" for some drivers. A certain level of skill is necessary to operate these sports cars safely and comfortably.

Additionally, the pursuit of optimal performance has often required manufacturers to look past considerations of comfort and regular usability. If one plans to do more than display their exotic purchase and hopes to drive it regularly, they must understand whether they can successfully use the vehicle comfortably and safely.

When considering the purchase of an exotic sports car, one must look past the romance and excitement of owning a legendary vehicle. One must also focus their attentions on very real concerns regarding expense, reliability and drivability before investing in an exotic sports car.

### **Three Keys to Sports Car Buyer Research**

Purchasing a new or used sports car usually requires a relatively significant monetary investment. Top of the line styling and performance does not always come cheap and automobiles require repair and maintenance expenses that add to their original price tags.

Considering the money you are likely to invest in a sports car, it makes sense to research extensively prior to buying the car. Good research can help ensure you end up in the perfect sports car for you--not only in terms of design and function, but also in terms of your pocketbook.

There are three principle resources that should be consulted prior to investing in a sports car.

#### **Internet**

The Internet offers an incomparable quantity of information that can be of tremendous value to a prospective sports car buyer. One can find car reviews, technical breakdowns and analyses, and various automobile sellers through quality Internet research.

In addition to gathering mechanical information and base insight into different models of cars that might appeal to you, the internet also gives you a chance to perform a global analysis of asking prices and deals being offered on the types of cars that interest you the most. You may

learn that dealers in more distant regions of the country are able to provide better deals on the specific model you covet. Locally, you might be able to find the asking prices from several dealers in your area.

One must, however, take care to consider the quality of the source material they discover while perusing the 'net. One of the greatest attributes of the Internet is that it allows an easily accessible forum for people of all types. When conducting research, that quality can also be a detriment. Try to keep in mind the apparent source qualifications and biases that might be present when gathering sports car information via the Internet.

## **Publications**

Although the Internet offers a wealth of information, traditional print publications remain a tremendous resource. The automobile publication market is crowded with a variety of titles, many of which might offer great detailed insight on the particular cars in which you are interested. It is not uncommon for many automobile makes to have titles centered specifically on them. These sources can provide analysis and information you may not be able to find anywhere else.

Any local newsstand can give you a variety of options. A local library may also be able to supply you with both current and back issues of popular automotive magazines. This can be of great value when considering a used sports car. Articles written about the car when it was introduced may contain information that is hard to find on the Internet and is not regularly presented elsewhere.

## **Experts**

Prospective sports car buyers often overlook one of the most valuable resources available: local experts. If you are interested in purchasing a particular make or model of sports car, it makes great sense to discuss your prospective buy with mechanics specializing in their care.

A mechanic who specializes in English imports, for instance, might be able to tell you what to expect in terms of regular maintenance costs or if the particular English sports car you are considering is especially prone to any mechanical problem necessitating expensive repair.

Mechanics and other experts are likely to give you a unique perspective that one can only gain from being "under the hood" on a regular basis. Even the most ardent do-it-yourself type can benefit from the knowledge imparted from an expert repairman. Their opinions can be of special value when considering a used vehicle, as mechanics often know what problems are likely for older cars and can give you an idea of how much money you can expect to spend to keep your purchase in perfect running order.

Consulting with mechanics also provides a value in excess of the information gained. You may find someone you can trust to work on your sports car in the future.

After conducting extensive research on the sports cars in which you are interested, you can move to discussions with dealers and other sellers with additional confidence and an expert understanding of the vehicle.

Performing great research prior to stepping onto the lot will help you narrow your search, pick the car that meets your needs, and leave you much better prepared to begin price negotiations as you seek out the perfect sports car.

### **Renting a Sports Car: Excitement on Loan**

When one thinks of rental cars, they usually imagine overused sedans in neutral colors that lack pep or performance. Rental cars have often been generic, neutral vehicles maintained due to their functionality and reliability. The ho-hum prospect of renting a car in the past rarely elicited any feeling of excitement.

The car rental process, however, has changed over time. Now, a prospective renter can choose from a wider spectrum of vehicles, including popular high-performance sports cars.

A sports car might appeal to a renter for any number of reasons. A single person traveling alone may crave something novel and fun while on a dull business trip or as a means of rounding out a vacation trip. Others may wish to try their hand at driving a sports car on a temporary basis just for the sake of variety.

Still others can use the opportunity to rent a sports car as a financially viable means of creating an extended test drive prior to making a sports car purchase. There are true sports car enthusiasts who need a rental car for any number of reasons and can simply not imagine a return to the doldrums of driving a conventional car.

This great variety of reasons has created sufficient demand for rental agencies to add sports cars to their available fleet of autos. Now, in addition to station wagons, economy class cars and base sedans, more and more rental companies are providing prospective customers with a healthy array of sports car options.

Of course, one cannot expect to rent a high-end import sports car at rates similar to those they might pay for a domestic standard issue vehicle. Sports cars, of course, are more expensive to purchase, maintain and insure. Thus, one can expect to pay significantly higher rates when renting one.

In addition to higher base rental rates, prospective customers can also anticipate some additional expenses. For instance, sports cars generally do not boast the fuel efficiency found in the more frequently rented subcompact cars and gas bills for the period of the rental are likely to run high.

Additionally, the rental agency may require additional insurance purchase, or at the very least, more expensive insurance options, than are generally required of other rented vehicles. Remember, the agency must purchase (or lease) these cars at considerably higher prices than standard models and that expense will be reflected throughout your rental experience.

Younger drivers may also encounter some difficulties in renting high-end sports cars. Rental agencies have always been somewhat restrictive when it comes to the age of drivers, but there

are likely to have even stiffer requirements for the rental of sports cars. Rental agencies want to insure the safety of their sports car investments.

Sports car rentals create a unique opportunity for renters. It allows someone who may otherwise never have the opportunity to take the wheel of a high-performance vehicle to see what all the fuss is about. It can give one a chance at glamour and excitement for a few days without any real commitment or long-term burden. Although the cost of renting a sports car may be high enough to freeze some renters out of the market, their availability does increase their accessibility to those who may never have another opportunity to enjoy the sports car experience.

The next time you are renting a car, you may want to consider trying an exotic sports car for a few days. It can add something unique to your vacation or business trip. You can experience the excitement of sports car driving without the burdens of sports car ownership. If one can afford the additional expense of a great rental car upgrade, the rental sports car experience may be a great alternative to chugging about in a dull generic car.

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