

The Active Consumer

Car-Buying Tips And Tools

(NAPSA)—If you're in the market for a car—new or used—you have more information at hand than at any other time in the history of car buying, in large part due to the Internet and the competitive nature of today's automotive market.

Automakers' Web sites are a great place to begin your quest for information. Most manufacturers have an online tool to virtually "build" your vehicle, choosing the trim levels, options and accessories that are most important to you. Is a sunroof important? Check. Leather seats? Check. All-wheel drive? Check. The automakers' Web site will also steer you to a dealer near you, so you can check out locally available inventory.

Since safety is such an important consideration when buying a car, be sure to check out the vehicle's crashworthiness ratings at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). Search the Web site (www.iihs.org) for vehicles that have been named a "Top Safety Pick" by the institute, which means that the vehicle has earned the top rating in each of four crash tests. Subaru (www.subaru.com), for example, is the rare manufacturer with at least one Top Safety Pick in every vehicle class in which it competes.

If you are considering a used vehicle, arm yourself with pricing knowledge before you begin shopping for your dream car by checking out Kelley Blue Book



Add a feature, subtract a feature, some car shopping sites offer you tools to help you outfit your vehicle online.

online at www.kbb.com. The site gives typical pricing for each trim level of a used vehicle, allows you to customize by adding options and accessories, and adjusts vehicle valuations based on the condition of the used car.

One way to avoid the uncertainty that often comes with buying a used vehicle is to take advantage of a manufacturer's Certified Pre-Owned (CPO) vehicle program. CPO vehicles are given a thorough inspection, often with well over 100 points inspected, and generally come with an extended warranty, including power train coverage. Some manufacturers, such as Subaru of America, enhance their CPO programs with additional features, including a CARFAX® Vehicle History Report and 24/7 roadside assistance.

Visit www.subaru.com to learn more.