

Buying a new car - by Brent Skinner - May 2016

Buying a new car! This is a chore that needs to be undertaken every decade or so. It can be quite exciting, but also involves a big investment in time and money.

The first step is coming to the decision that your existing vehicle needs to be replaced. Men are emotionally bonded to 3 inanimate objects - their golf clubs, their wallets (not the contents of the wallet but the actual leather wallet) and their existing car or truck. Dings, dents, rips and bends add an endearing quality to these objects of joy and reverence and only such dire events as engine conk-outs and the prospect of expensive repairs (as in the case of a vehicle), a really bad round of golf (where you were humiliated by your 12 year old nephew) or threat of divorce (as in the case of a dilapidated wallet) will force the typical man to overcome the lump in his throat and consider a replacement product.

In the case of a vehicle, the next step is determining what kind of new car will best meet your needs, with due consideration to lifestyle, price, image and fuel efficiency. I purchased a 2016 - 2017 new vehicles Buyer's Guide which provided detailed specifications on 330 different vehicles. My 6 year old grandson thought that a Lamborghini Huracan Coupe would look good in my driveway (list price \$282,000 to \$311,000) while my wife thought that an electric bicycle (price list \$250-\$800) would be a good deal, and that I could share her 2005 Toyota Echo in non cycling seasons. My daughter had the opinion that I should purchase a Mazda MX-5 convertible (price list \$32,900 to \$39,200), grow a pony tail, buy a bunch of tropical rayon shirts, and join all those other gray haired and balding old guys who are living out their high school fantasies. After widespread consultations with neighbours, my banker and our postal delivery person, I determined that my replacement car should be small, garish, fuel efficient and cheap.

I then nervously tiptoed into a dealership showroom, and started to look at 2016 models. That wonderful new car smell wafts throughout new car showrooms and, combined with the equally compelling odor of new all season tires and new car multi colour sales brochures, puts you into an olfactory high, primed and ready to purchase a new vehicle. Suddenly I spotted the car of my dreams - small, sporty and the most wonderful shade of snot green . After summoning a salesperson, I discovered that the price fell within my established budget.

The next and final step in buying a new car involves shifting from cubicle to cubicle and meeting a bewildering number of people, including but not limited to sales person, sales manager, finance person, and service manager. I toured the service wing of the dealership, signed and initialed lots of papers, studied the maintenance manual, promised to get the oil changed every 8,000 kilometres, and was oriented to my new vehicle, including using the dashboard computer screen to connect to my Apple iPhone (I didn't understand a word he was saying and don't have an Apple iPhone anyway). I must have shaken hands with around a hundred people - I don't know if they were congratulating me on making such a clever new car purchase or thanking me for getting that awful green machine out of the dealership showroom, and thereby improving the overall showroom ambience, new car smell notwithstanding.

Finally, I climbed into my new vehicle and headed home, hoping that I could avoid an accident, and trying to remember how to turn on the windshield wipers.

The next few weeks will be spent in agony, trying to avoid scratching the paint on the new car and screaming at my grandchildren to finish their

sprinkle doughnuts before climbing into the new back seat.

Television commercials promote new cars on the grounds that they will make you more attractive to the opposite sex, help you explore remote wilderness, or demonstrate to the world that you are successful and unafraid of change, or of committing a massive chunk of the next 3 years of income to car payments. The truth is that having a new car may well turn you into an impoverished, paranoid and grumpy grandpa. Still, my new vehicle is a really attractive shade of green. Happy driving!