

New Ways to Buy a Car

Think about the last time you bought a pair of shoes or a laptop. You looked at the price, maybe compared a few choices, and paid what was listed. Now think about buying a car. Suddenly the rules are completely different. The price on the window is just a starting point, and what you actually pay depends on how well you can negotiate and how much patience you have.

Buying a car in the United States has worked this way for a long time, and most people hate the experience. In one study, people were willing to pay about \$1,100 extra on a \$20,000 car just to avoid negotiating. But unlike almost every other purchase, bargaining is still a normal part of how cars are sold. Salespeople earn money based on how much they sell, and extra services like extended warranties can add thousands to the final price. The average new car in the U.S. now costs close to \$50,000. With so much money involved, even a small advantage in negotiation makes a big difference.

This is the problem that Tomi Mikula is trying to solve. Mikula is a former car salesman from North Carolina who spent over ten years working at dealerships before changing careers. Three years ago, he started helping buyers get better prices, at first for free. Today his company has a small team of negotiators and charges \$1,000 per deal. The business earns about \$200,000 a month.

Mikula does almost all of his work by phone instead of going to dealerships, and this is on purpose. Buyers who spend hours sitting at a dealership start to feel like they have wasted too much time to leave without buying something. This often leads them to accept a bad deal just to finish the process. By staying on the phone, Mikula avoids that trap and keeps the conversation focused on price.

His method is simple: he contacts several dealerships and asks for prices on the same car. Then he uses those prices to make the dealers compete with each other, which forces them to offer lower numbers. He also records some of his phone calls and shares them online with about 600,000 followers. Some of the more intense conversations have become very popular, and many dealers now see him as a problem. A few even hang up as soon as they hear his voice.

Not every deal leads to big savings. The result usually depends on timing, how many cars are available, and how much competition there is between local dealers. But for many buyers, the value is not just about saving money. It is also about not having to sit in a dealership for hours.

Mikula's videos are also helping regular buyers learn to negotiate on their own. One customer watched his videos for weeks before visiting a dealership. Instead of discussing monthly payments, which can hide the true cost, he asked about the total price including all taxes and fees. When the salesperson said there was little room for a discount, the buyer showed him on his phone that many of the same car were sitting at other nearby dealerships. He ended up paying \$4,000 less than the listed price.

Technology is changing car buying too. One company has built an AI tool that sends emails to many dealerships for you. It negotiates prices and hides your name until the deal is finished. This system uses a lot of data and does not get nervous or stressed. For people who hate bargaining, letting a computer do it is a very appealing choice.

There is also a completely different approach. Tesla does not use the traditional dealer system. It sells cars directly to customers through its website and its own stores. The listed price is the final price. There are no salespeople working on commission and no surprise fees. Other electric car companies have copied this model, and some traditional car makers are starting to try fixed pricing too.

What all of this shows is something simple about negotiation. People avoid it not because they are not smart enough, but because the process feels uncomfortable and unfair. A person who buys a car once every few years is up against someone who does it every day. That gap is why professional negotiators, AI tools, and fixed prices are becoming popular. They give ordinary buyers a fairer chance.

- 1) Have you ever tried to negotiate the price of something?
- 2) Do you prefer to bargain for a lower price, or do you like it when the price is fixed?
- 3) In Korea, what kinds of things can you negotiate the price of?
- 4) Would you pay someone to negotiate a big purchase for you?
- 5) Do you think people make worse decisions when they have already spent a lot of time on something?
- 6) Do you think it is easier to negotiate by phone, by text, or face to face?
- 7) Would you trust an AI tool to negotiate for you?
- 8) Do you think it is better for customers when the price of something is fixed, like Tesla does with its cars?
- 9) Besides buying and selling, what are some other situations where negotiation skills are useful?
- 10) Do you think negotiating is something you can learn, or are some people just naturally better at it?

Listed	(adj)	shown or written as the official price	The listed price of the apartment was higher than what they expected to pay.
Negotiate	(v)	to discuss something in order to reach an agreement, especially about a price	She tried to negotiate a lower rent with her landlord before signing the contract.
Study	(n)	a piece of research done to learn more about a subject	A recent study found that most workers prefer flexible working hours.
Avoid	(v)	to stay away from something or stop something from happening	He always tries to avoid driving during rush hour because of the traffic.

Bargaining	(n)	the process of discussing a price or agreement until both sides are satisfied	Bargaining is common at street markets, but not usually at department stores.
Extended	(adj)	longer or more than the usual or standard amount	They bought an extended warranty for their washing machine in case it broke after the first year.
Warranty	(n)	a written promise from a company to repair or replace a product if it breaks within a certain time	The phone came with a two-year warranty, so the repair was free.
Involved	(adj)	connected to or part of a situation	There were a lot of people involved in planning the company event.
Advantage	(n)	something that helps you do better than others in a situation	Speaking two languages gives you a big advantage when looking for a job.
Former	(adj)	having been something in the past but not now	The former teacher now works as a writer and travels around the world.
Dealership	(n)	a business that is allowed to sell a particular company's products, especially cars	They visited three different dealerships before choosing which car to buy.
On purpose	(exp)	done because you planned or wanted to do it; not by accident	She did not break the glass on purpose. It was an accident.
Trap	(n)	a situation that is difficult to escape from	Working overtime every day became a trap that was hard to break out of.
Focused	(adj)	giving all of your attention to one thing	She stayed focused on her studies even when her friends invited her out.
Force	(v)	to make someone do something they do not want to do	The bad weather forced them to cancel the outdoor concert.
Hang up	(phr v)	to end a phone call, sometimes suddenly or rudely	He got angry during the conversation and hung up without saying goodbye.
Lead	(v)	to cause something to happen as a result	Eating too much sugar can lead to health problems over time.
Room	(n)	space or possibility for something to happen or change	There is not much room for discussion. The decision has already been made.
Sit	(v)	to remain in a place without being used or sold	The old furniture has been sitting in the garage for months.

Data	(n)	facts or information, especially numbers, collected for study or analysis	The company collects data about what products customers buy most often.
Appealing	(adj)	attractive or interesting	The idea of working from home is very appealing to many young professionals.
Approach	(n)	a way of doing or thinking about something	The school uses a new approach to teaching math that focuses on real-life problems.
Directly	(adv)	without anyone or anything in between	You can buy tickets directly from the airline's website to get the best price.
Commission	(n)	extra money a worker earns for each sale they make	The salespeople earn a small commission every time they sell a product.
Fixed pricing	(n)	a system where the price is set and cannot be changed or negotiated	The restaurant uses fixed pricing for its lunch menu, so every meal costs the same.
Unfair	(adj)	not treating people equally or in a reasonable way	Many workers feel it is unfair that some people get paid more for doing the same job.
Gap	(n)	a difference between two things, people, or groups	There is a large gap between what the company offers and what employees want.
Ordinary	(adj)	normal; not special or different	It was just an ordinary day until she got the phone call about the job offer.
Fair	(adj)	treating everyone equally and in a reasonable way	The teacher tried to be fair and give every student the same amount of time to finish the test.