

Preparing Your Trade-in for Top Dollar

When buying a car, you have decisions to make about what to do with the car you presently own. To help you decide, get the *Black Book Used Car Market Guide* prices on your trade-in.

This guide is the one widely used by most auto dealers. According to the *Black Book*, “Clean” means very little interior or exterior wear, matching tires with good tread, mechanically sound. “Average” means visibly normal interior and exterior wear. Still a good vehicle with substantial service remaining.

With wholesale values in hand, you can get your vehicle ready for trade-in. You may want to detail your vehicle. Clean it inside and out. When the used car manager drives your car to give you his estimate, he is affected by how it looks and smells. Good tires are important to auto wholesalers, so have them balanced or replace them if they are obviously worn. Check the cost of alignments, if needed. Check your car for rust. If there

are spots, cover with touch-up paint. If your car has dings, “ding” specialists can remove them.

If there is a major mechanical problem with your car, knowing the trade-in value up front will let you know if it's worthwhile to fix. If it might cost more to fix your car than it's worth, decide NOT to trade it. It will only detract from your getting the best price on your new vehicle. Instead, think about donating it to a charitable organization.

If your car is in good condition, an important factor is mileage. The *Black Book* states: “The industry standard is 15,000 miles per model year. Mileage in excess of industry standards may lower the overall classification.” Conversely, low-mileage cars bring top dollar.

Trade-ins are negotiable. Chances are, a dealer will offer you a low figure up front, in expectation that you will counter. Knowing the value of your trade-in first is crucial to getting a good car deal.