

# 7 Steps to Successfully Buying A Used Vehicle



***Preowned Solutions***  
AUTO • TRUCK • MOTORCYCLE • BOAT • TRAILER

# Have a not to exceed budget number and get pre-financed.

It's easy to fall in love with a vehicle once you're on the lot. Suddenly, you're talking yourself into spending more than you really can afford. Fast forward a few months and you may really be regretting your decision, no matter how much you love the vehicle. No car or truck is worth getting yourself into financial trouble.

But if you've already determined what monthly payment/car price will work for you and you've already secured a loan for that amount, it will be much easier to stick to your budget even when that convertible is winking at you.

As you're doing the math -- don't forget to consider the costs of tax, title, registration and insurance for your new vehicle. You want to be able to afford to keep your car, not just buy it.

There are plenty of online calculators that will help you determine your limit. Just remember that long after the excitement of your new vehicle has worn off, the payments will still be around. So make sure they're something you can comfortably live with.

Third party financing can usually be approved without having to indicate a specific make or model of vehicle ahead of time. Some institutions will give you a lower interest rate if you have direct deposit and an electronic loan payment, so be sure to ask about these options when applying for financing.

At Preowned Solutions we can connect you to lenders we've worked with before and trust. Just ask for an introduction.



# Figure out what you need & want.

This is where a lot of people make their mistake. Rather than buying the vehicle that is going to serve them best, they buy a car or truck that they've fallen in love with while they're shopping around. Don't make that mistake. Do this step before you ever step on a car lot or start searching online.

Make a list of attributes that your new vehicle needs to have and those that you'd like it to have. Think about how you use your car or truck. Do you need to haul things or people? How critical is gas mileage? Do you want a sedan or an SUV?

Once you have your need and want lists, spend some time making a list of the vehicle models that meet those needs and as many of the wants as possible.

Next to each model – based on your budget, identify the model years within your price range. It doesn't make any sense to waste time chasing after a 2012 Chevy Malibu if your budget will only buy you the 2002 version.

As you're making your list, you might want to give your insurance agent a call. Don't assume your rates are going to stay the same. Depending on the vehicle you choose and your driving record, your insurance rates may go down or they may take a hike in the opposite direction. Typically, sport cars, anything with "turbo" or "supercharged" in the name, higher performance vehicles with larger or more powerful engines and vehicles with four-wheel drive will give you higher insurance rates. Also, consider that vehicles with histories of being stolen can demand a premium. Insuring a Ford Mustang or BMW isn't the same as insuring a Taurus.

You now know what types of vehicles to search for and based on your budget, what range of model years you should consider. Now you're ready to hop online or visit a lot to see which of your preferred vehicles is out there, waiting for you.

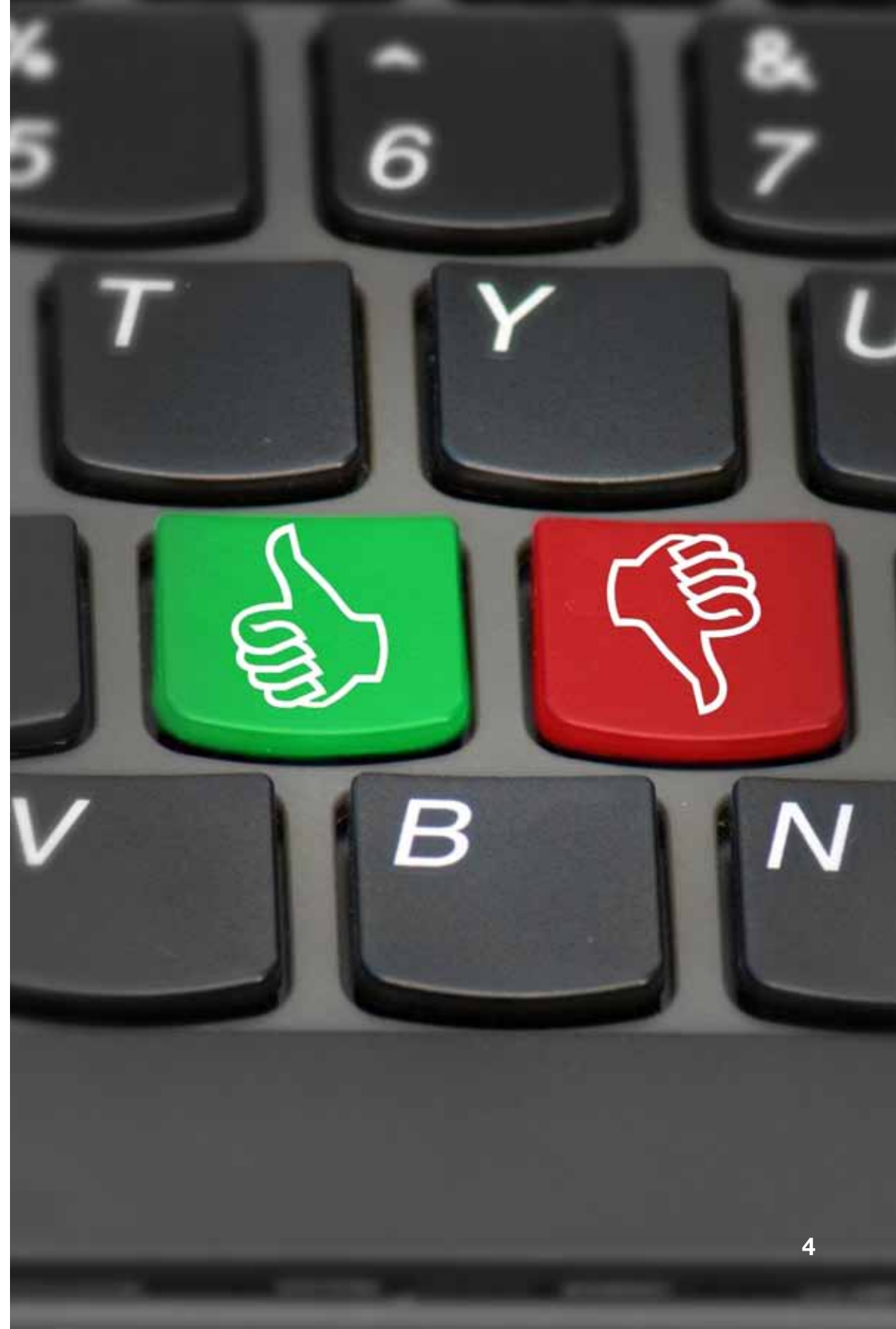
Another option at this stage is to come see us at Preowned Solutions. Come talk to us about what you're looking for and we'll help you identify which vehicles match your needs and wants. Then, we'll go find that vehicle for you and take all the hassle off your shoulders. We think of ourselves as a concierge used car dealer. Let us do the work.



# See what others have to say.

Thanks to the Internet, you can do a lot of research about the vehicles on your list. Read the reviews for the cars on your list and re-order your list, based on the review results. Remember, no vehicle gets a perfect review so be realistic and practical.

If you're buying an older car or truck, you might want to also search to see if there have been any significant recalls or long term issues with the make/model you're interested in. A great resource for that search is [nhtsa.dot.gov](http://nhtsa.dot.gov), which is maintained by U.S. DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



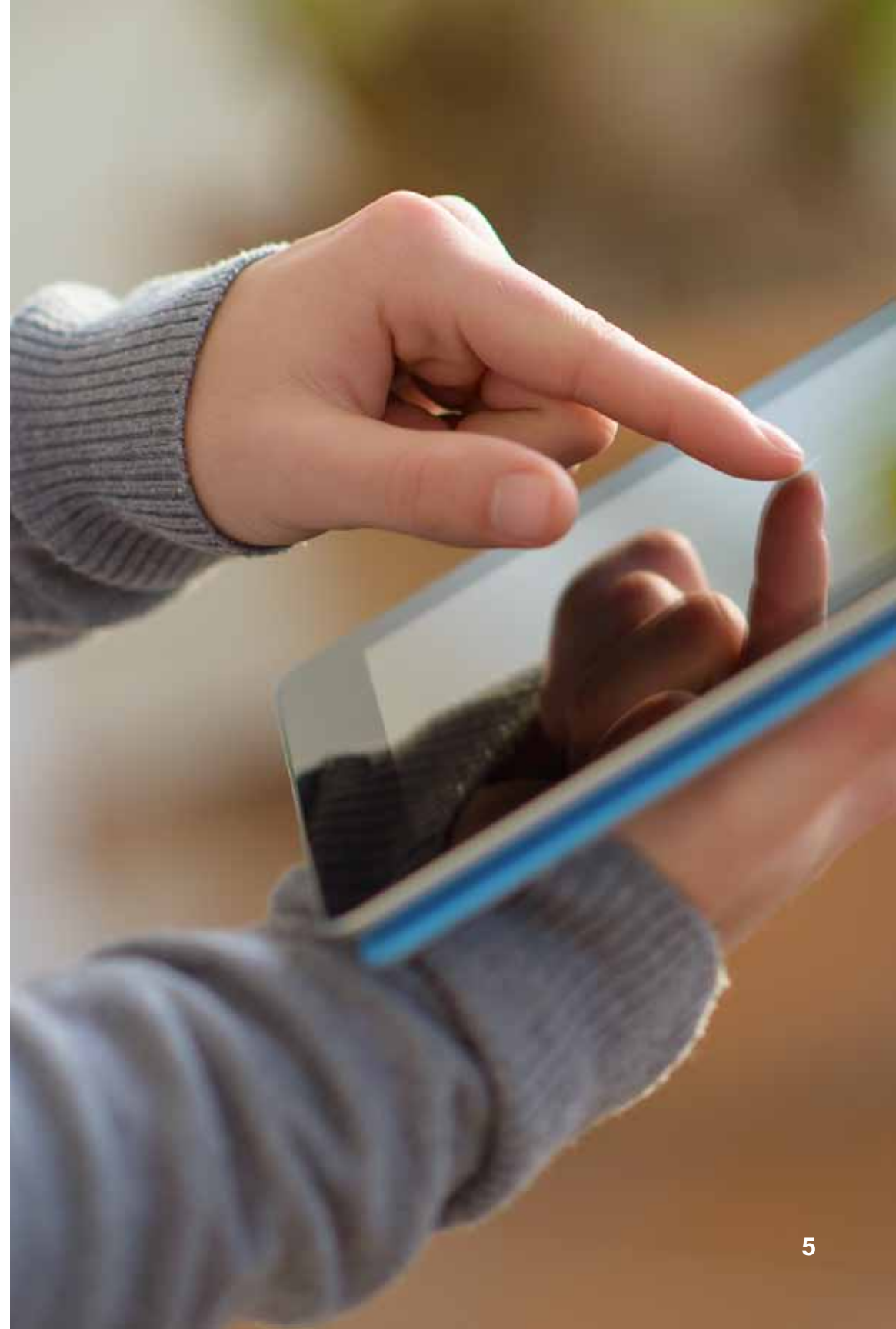


# Check the vehicle history report.

Before you commit to buying a car, ask to see the vehicle history report.

If the dealer doesn't have one, you can access vehicle history reports, which are sold by several different companies, by the vehicle identification number (VIN). AutoCheck and Carfax are probably the two best-known options for getting a vehicle history report.

Ask about anything on the report that concerns you and if you don't get a satisfactory answer, don't buy.



# Get out there and look.

Sooner or later, you need to actually go out and start looking at vehicles. As you're coming across potential contenders, be sure you:

- Inspect the car during the daylight hours so you look for imperfections
- Look for overspray which might indicate recent body work or paint work
- Check the tires for "cupping" -- a series of indentations in the tire tread which may suggest an alignment or suspension issue

After you've found a vehicle that passes your visual inspection, it's time for a test drive. Try to drive on the same type of roads and routes that you normally drive. If you take the highway to work – be sure you take it out on the highway. If you do a lot of stop/start city driving – then head downtown or any other busy part of your community.

As you take your test drive, be mindful of:

- How easy is it for you to get in/out of the vehicle?
- Once you're behind the wheel, do you have enough legroom, headroom etc.? Don't forget to get in/out and sit in the back seat as well.
- Is it easy to see everything on the dash? Are all the gauges easy to read?
- How does the car feel as you accelerate? Does it have enough pick up?
- Listen for how the vehicle sounds. Is it loud? Do you hear any sounds you need to ask about?
- How does it handle? How responsive is the car?

After you've driven the car, ask the dealer if they have the service records. This will depend on where they got the vehicle and its last owner.



# Have a professional you know and trust look over the vehicle.

If you are not mechanically inclined and only lift your car's hood to add more windshield wiper fluid, it's always a good idea to take the car you think you'd like to own to your own mechanic and pay for a pre-purchase inspection. If nothing else, it's peace of mind.





# Negotiate your deal.

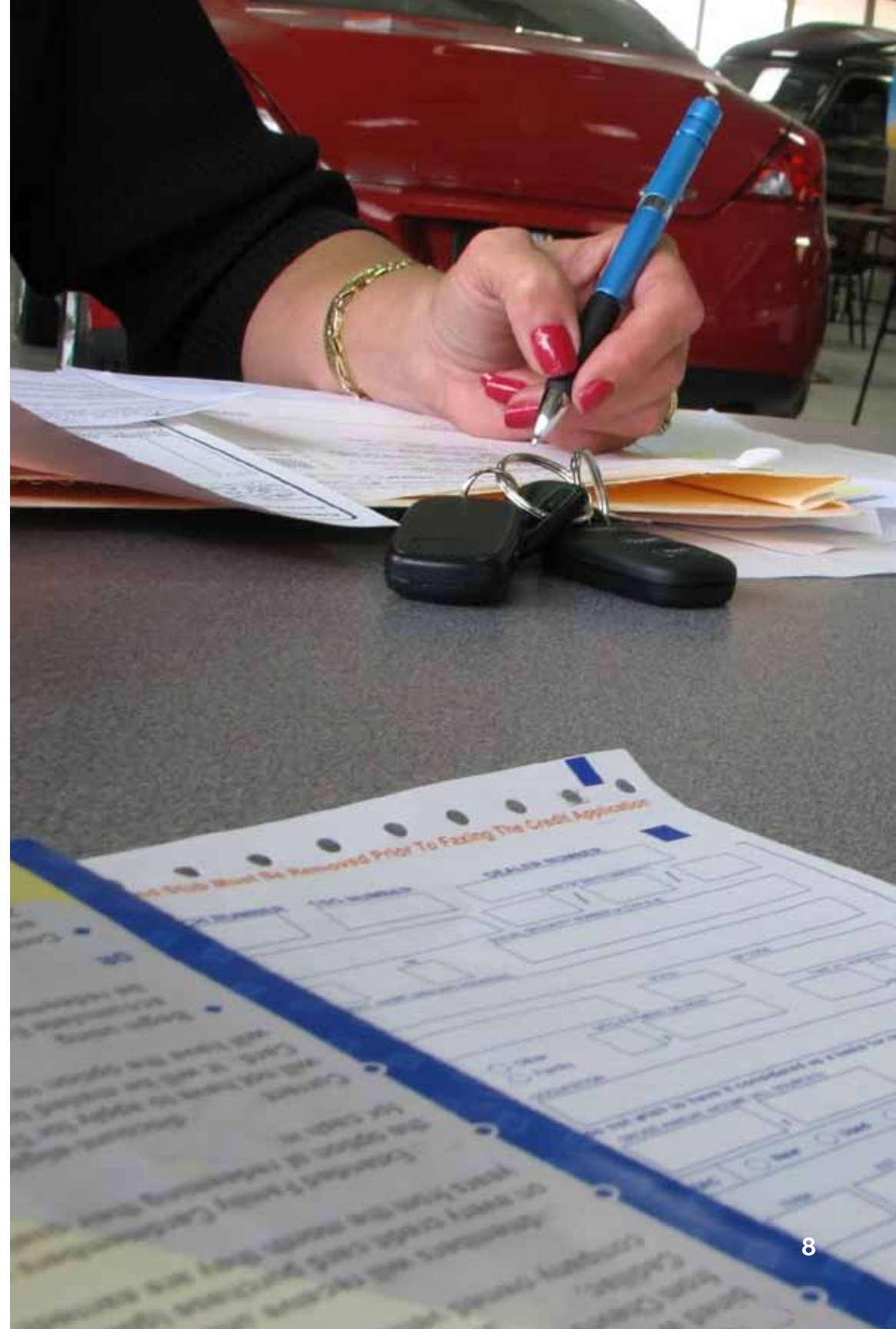
The dealer doesn't enjoy the goofy back and forth negotiations any more than you do. The good news is – you set the tone for the negotiation process. If you initiate an offer that is ridiculously low then the dealer knows they're in for a long haul.

You can find out what a reasonable offer would be at <http://www.nadaguides.com> or <http://www.kbb.com> but remember – these sites can give you generalized information and should only be used as a guide. Some vehicles are in such demand that they can command a premium price that is above what the guides would suggest. Individual factors like maintenance and condition are paramount.

The more straightforward you are, the more straightforward the dealer can be. If you don't trust the dealer – don't buy the vehicle there. You need to feel confident that the dealer is actually trying to help you, not take advantage of you.

After you've agreed upon a purchase price, you need to make sure you have the car insured before you drive it off the lot. (Talk to your insurance agent in advance)

Now it's time for you to enjoy your new ride, confident that you've bought a vehicle that will serve you well for many years.





# About the author.

Tab Miller owns Preowned Solutions, Iowa's 2014 Dealer of the Year.

He and his wife Mona opened Preowned Solutions in 2011 because they believed they could bring something unique to Central Iowa. Their goal is to make customers for life. They truly believe if we help someone find a great vehicle at a very fair price, they will come back.

Their business practices are based on these beliefs.

- Work hard, work smart
- Listen, respond proactively with respect
- Tell the truth and let your reputation precede you
- Take care of the customer
- Empower and respect the employee
- Focus on ethics and morals
- If we do all these things consistently and with diligence, profits will follow!

Tab has been in the car business in some capacity since 1975 in one way or another and has finally realized his dream of owning his own dealership.



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