

Totally That Stupid's Guide to Making a Decent Car Ad and Selling Your Car

1. Key Elements of Ad Text

DO include:

1. Year, Make, Model, Sub-model (if applicable) - "2001 Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG"
2. Current Mileage
3. Title Status (Clear, financed/need to pay off/branded and if branded, why?)
4. Transmission - and no, a sequential shift/tiptronic is NOT a manual transmission. A manual transmission has a gear selector and a clutch.
5. A list of accessories (AC, power windows, power locks, sunroof, stereo, heated seats, adjustable suspension, etc.) and their functionality. If it was equipped with something but it doesn't work or is failing, just say so. Don't make that a happy surprise when a buyer shows up or receives the car.
6. Any modifications to the car.
7. Any recent service work/part replacements/upgrades.
8. Condition of wear and tear items - battery, tires, and brakes, primarily.
9. A general description of the car including colors (inside and out), condition, known history, and why you are selling (unless there's really no reason - although in those cases I just tell people honestly that I have a short attention span). If you're a dealer, be upfront about it whether you have a brick and mortar shop or not.
10. Any other condition issues including but not limited to: rust, dents, glass cracks, torn upholstery, sagging headliner, dash cracks, missing parts.
11. Any information you have about where the car came from, past owners, and history of accidents/floods/odometer issues. If you have a CarFax or equivalent, history report, offer to share it. If there is something negative on the report, explain it if you can.
12. Availability to make the car available for inspection. Even during the current pandemic there's no reason not to let a buyer or their agent see a car. Get some spare disposable masks and disinfectant to make everyone comfortable. There is no reason someone should buy a car that a seller won't let them inspect. MAJOR red flag.
13. Comprehensive, clear photos per sections 2, 3, and 4 below.
14. If applicable, relevant information about accepted payment methods, willingness to assist shippers.

DO NOT include:

1. A complete history of the model. If I am looking at the car, I have an idea what it is. If I don't know about it but am interested, this is 2020 and I can Google it. Extraneous text about the general car model makes a potential buyer lose interest trying to sort through to find the details about the specific car on the table.
2. "AC just needs a charge" - If it just needs a charge - CHARGE IT. This is one of my key pet peeves. As stated above, just indicate if it works or it doesn't, and if you know anything specific about why it doesn't (no compressor, receiver dryer fell off, etc.) then state that.
3. Blurry photos, pictures of your girlfriend posing with the car, pictures of someone else's car (even if "just for reference"), pictures that are too close or cut off, pictures that conveniently miss major issues, edited pictures.
4. A complete lack of information. Again, I've gotten some great deals this way, but we're trying to help you - the seller - here. A little bit of effort will make a difference.

2. The Five Pictures You MUST Include

1. Front/Quarter
2. Rear/Quarter (opposite side of car from front quarter)
3. Front Seat Area
4. Rear Seat Area
5. Engine Bay

3. Five More Photos You Really Should Include

1. Convertible Top (this is really a MUST if you're selling a convertible)
2. Problem Areas - Rust, damage, etc. (again, really a MUST, but if you don't take pictures you have to describe)
3. Driver's Seat
4. Trunk
5. Modifications

4. Other “Nice to Have” Photos

1. Dashboard
2. Door panels
3. Odometer
4. Undercarriage and hard to see areas like door bottoms, etc.
5. Known Trouble Spots
6. Books and Records
7. Other OEM equipment (tool kits, emergency kits, extra floor mats, repair manuals, third seats, etc.)
8. Tires and Wheels
9. More angles - interior, exterior, engine, undercarriage, trunk

5. The Selling Process

1. Be available and responsive. If someone is looking at spending real money on your car, don't be hard to reach.
2. Answer all of their questions, even the tough ones.
3. Let them have the car inspected by a pro - at their expense. Ideally you may have had a mechanic look it over before you listed it for sale - especially if the price of entry is more than about \$10K. I'm a fan of the buyer coordinating getting it to or from the inspector or the inspector coming to the car, but that's really up to you as the seller.
4. Be willing to sell remotely. This is 2020, the internet means we can see ads all over the world. The ability to purchase should come down to 1) the buyer's ability to pay (and the payment clearing the bank); 2) whether the car meets local requirements (read: US EPA/DOT and 25 year rule); 3) The buyer's ability to have the car picked-up and delivered to them at their expense - but be flexible about working with the shipper on meeting times, etc. Conversely, be willing to pick the buyer up at a nearby airport.
5. For remote buyers or folks who may be in-person hesitant, consider making videos available on YouTube or similar covering interior and exterior walkaround and start-up. If you have someone else hold the phone/camera, a driving video is good to have as well. Alternately, consider offering a Skype or FaceTime walkaround with the potential buyer.
6. Accept convenient payment methods. My favorite is bank wire transfer/ACH, but if the buyer is willing to pay the fee I'll take PayPal. Bank checks are okay, but take longer to clear.
7. Offer to express important documents once payment is clear - title and bill of sale primarily. If there is a lot of service history, spare keys, expensive or rare bits - send those separately as well. It's not all the time, but stuff can disappear from a car during shipment.