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For many people, car shopping can be a frustrating, time-consuming and inconvenient experience. The good news is that with a little know-how you can use the Internet to turn what might otherwise be overwhelming into a manageable, even enjoyable experience. The Web is an excellent resource to help reduce the stress of car shopping and increase the likelihood of finding exactly the vehicle you are looking for.

The online shopping search starts with thinking about the basic things you want in a new car. Ask yourself, "Do I want a new, used or certified preowned vehicle?" and "Would I prefer a car, SUV or truck?" It's also important to ask "Do I have a favorite vehicle manufacturer?" and "If I buy a used vehicle, how important is the vehicle's current mileage to me?" Narrowing your preferences on at least a few of these items will minimize frustration and help lead you in the right direction.

Next, you need to know where to go. Visit consumer-friendly Web sites such as Edmunds.com, Auto Trader.com and AOL for news, reviews and comprehensive vehicle overviews. The Internet allows you to shop for cars in your area on your own schedule, when you have time, without regard for the dealerships' hours of operation. Automotive Web sites that allow you to save car listings and searches will help you save even more time, since you can go back to where you left off instead of starting fresh each time you visit.

Once you have reduced your search to a few select vehicles, do a side-by-side comparison of the cars. With just a few clicks, you can quickly compare up-to-date vehicle information and reviews, features and benefits and costs of several vehicles. More information in less time is a bargain any consumer can appreciate.

Want your own customized shopping experience? Automotive Web sites such as AutoTrader.com allow you to personalize your car search. Registered users of the "My AutoTrader.com" function, listed on the company's homepage, can save up to 10 searches and up to 25 cars in their personal space and refer back to the searches at a later date. In addition, the comparison tool allows you to compare your top three car choices.

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