

# **Buy it Like a PRO!**

Learn the Tips & Tricks of the Trade.

**Special Feature**

**10** secrets you are **NOT**  
supposed to know!



*By Jim Sabia*

Buy it Like a Pro! I hope you find the information provided helpful in your quest to find a great new or pre-owned boat. Please understand that the information provided is primarily geared toward power boats under 35 feet. Its contents are provided for entertainment purposes only so let's dive right in and begin with the basics...

## Chapter 1 - The Basics

What kind of boat do we need?

I always ask my clients... what will you be doing with your new boat? They often look at each other for clues as to what their significant other might be thinking. For this example I would encourage some independent thinking. Involving everyone in the family or group is the best way to develop an idea of what a boat will need to be able to do in order to make the majority happy. If each member of the group separately makes a list of activities they want to be able to do on the boat you will be able to compare the lists and if an activity is listed by more than 1 member of the group it should be added to the master list. The master list should be arranged by the number of times listed on the individual lists. Below is a basic list of possible activities you might want to do on your boat, use this as a guide.

Activity List	Most to Least Important
Cruising / Sight Seeing	
Picnicking	
Water Sports	
Over-Night Trips	
Fishing - Inshore	
Fishing - Offshore	
Racing/Performance	
Partying	
Trips Over 50 Miles	
Eat Meals on Board	

Once you have a master list of activities you can begin to narrow down the type of boat that would best work for your needs. Visit [www.topnotchmarine.com](http://www.topnotchmarine.com) or [www.discoverboating.com](http://www.discoverboating.com) for more information.

### Other Considerations

Where will we store the boat?

Try to store your boat in an easily accessible location. The point here is, if you can't easily use your boat, you won't! It's that simple. If your boat is stored in a storage facility that is 10 miles out of the way or if you store it in the garage with stuff piled up in and on it you just won't go through the trouble to use it. Another side to storage is the exposure it will have to the elements, theft etc. My personal opinion on things like hurricanes is... make sure you have "replacement value" insurance (it's very inexpensive) and worry about what's really important, people, pets and finally possessions.

How much can your car or truck tow?

My suggestion here is to check either your owner's manual or your auto dealer to find out how much you can tow, and remember the challenge is not going down the road it's stopping safely and of course pulling your boat up the ramp. Try to create a situation where you can comfortably tow at highway speeds. This will allow you to travel with your boat and have fun where ever you might be!

How much can we afford?

That's a very private and personal matter. That being said, there are some things you should know... Pre-owned boats older than 5 years will end up costing on average about the same as a new one in

many cases. Yup, it's true, keep reading... Here's an example: You buy a 5 year old average 18' runabout boat, motor and trailer. You pay \$10,000 for it. Add to that some "fix-it-up" money, let's say \$1,000 for a tune-up, oil change and water pump rebuild, canvas replacement, etc. Based on my experience, a 5 year old boat will cost an average of \$500.00 or more in added repairs. If financed, pre-owned boats in many cases have a higher interest rate and lower terms than new. That means you will be paying a higher monthly payment because it is pre-owned! For my money I would much rather buy a new boat package with full warranty for a few thousand more. That equates to a few dollars per month... and we didn't even discuss reliability and safety yet. For more information on financing and payment calculating please visit <http://www.topnotchmarine.com>

How old is too old?

I think you can already tell that I am biased to new over pre-owned boats. Unless you are a great mechanic who would rather fix your boat on weekends than use it, try to buy new. If you can't afford new then I recommend buying a pre-owned boat from a reputable boat dealer. More on that later... Geographic; location plays a big part in this consideration as well. A boat from Michigan that gets used 3 months per year will be in far better condition than a boat in Georgia that is used all year long. As a general rule, 5 years old is the maximum I would consider in order to be reasonably sure the boat, motor and trailer will be reliable.

How often will we use it?

Boats are one of the few things in life where more use is better. When a boat is stored it seems to be less reliable than a boat that is used regularly. If you use a boat less than you store it I would recommend an engine that is fuel injected. Fuel injected engines are less likely to have fuel system related problems due to storage.

What is a great deal?

You didn't think I could really answer that did ya? I can tell you what a great deal isn't though... A great deal isn't a boat that will not do what you need at a good price. Another way to say it is... "Don't buy the wrong boat for the right price!". Actually, being in the boat business for over 20 years makes me think I can tell you if you are getting a great deal or not. If you think I can too, contact me, instructions are on the last page of the eBook.

## **Chapter 2 - Buying from a Private Party**

A little common sense will go a long way when buying from someone other than a boat dealer.

Trust Your Instincts

If you visit a seller's house and see a beat up car or their house is not well maintained, how well do you think they maintained the boat? Is the seller a do-it-yourself-er? I would much rather see service receipts from a professional repair facility than hear "yeah, I just rebuilt it myself". Does the seller make you feel uncomfortable? Does he or she act hurried? Do they have possession of the title and are willing to show it to you? Is the title in someone else's name? These are all signs that you may want to pass on this one.

Don't Rely on Opinions

When buying from an individual, never ask anyone other than a trusted and experienced boat salesperson who routinely deals in boats like the one you are interested in about it's value. What a boat is worth is simply what someone is willing to pay for it. Do not attempt to value a boat through a bank loan officer, a similar boat owner, or the popular guides available on line. These are all opinions of value. The popular valuation guides seen on line are used primarily by banks to determine how much they will lend on a boat. They are not used by professionals to determine the sale price of a boat. The seller will not have your best interest at heart and anyone else, other than an impartial pro, just wouldn't know. So why ask? An accurate valuation comes from comparisons, just like in real estate

appraisals; property is valued by what other similar pieces have sold for recently. This method takes many factors into account including economic, political and seasonal considerations. Want to learn exactly how to value a boat, new or used?

### Buy the Good Stuff

When buying pre-owned, try to buy quality name brands. Stay away from manufacturers you haven't seen or heard of before. Utilize Google to find out more about what you are buying... trust reliable sources based on fact not blog sites. If you must, take others' opinions with a grain of salt, in other words, don't believe everything you read.

## **Chapter 3 - Buying from a Dealer**

### Looks Can be Deceiving

A quality dealership in my opinion must have the following:

**Service Department and Dedicated Customer Service Personnel** - A quality dealership employs the many positions necessary to deliver you a properly prepared product. A dedicated boat service area, technicians, support staff, tools, equipment and the knowledge and experience required to use them are all necessary for your continued satisfaction. They should be available by phone as well.

**Parts and Accessories Department** - Without parts in stock you have to wait for your boat should it require service. A quality dealership stocks anything you may need to enjoy your boat now and in the future. Your time should be spent enjoying your boat, not waiting for parts.

**Professional Sales Staff** - A quality dealership is set apart by its sales staffs' ability to match you with the right boat package. This is a service that takes years of experience, knowledge and dedication on the part of the salesperson and the dealership. It is a critical part of your satisfaction with your new boat. Salespeople should be patient, courteous and friendly.

**Inventory** - You should be able to touch and feel as many choices as possible. This is a great way to determine what size and type boat works best for you. If possible bring the family so you can see what it will be like with the whole gang on board.

**Finance Department** - A quality dealership has an in house finance department. Dealers that "farm out" financing can not offer the same deals as those who do. By using a "middle man" to finance, they increase the cost to you for the financing in most cases. Another concern for me is the safety of your credit info. By faxing or emailing your credit application outside their offices, this opens the door to possible identity theft.

A quality dealership should be established. A dealer in business for 5 years is less established than a dealer in business for 20 years. A good reputation is worth it's weight in gold.

Ask questions like:

- How long have you been at this location?
- Do you have other locations?
- How long have you sold this brand boat here?
- Do you stock parts for this engine? If so, more than tune up items?
- Do you offer dockside or mobile service?
- Do you service boats and engine purchased elsewhere? This is very important if you plan on buying far from home. When your boat needs service, will you be last on the list?
- Are your technicians certified for this model or type of engine? Do you have the diagnostic equipment here at the dealership?

Once you have determined that the dealer is reputable, established, and properly equipped, it is easier to build relationships with them. These people are there to help you, communication with and availability between them and you should be important to you and valued. Boat buying is very different

than car buying because boats require more knowledge and experience than cars to enjoy. A quality dealership will make that difference vanish.

## **Chapter 4 - The Buying Process**

Make a Decision - New or Pre-Owned

Are you buying new or pre-owned? What's better? That depends on your needs, your budget, your mechanical ability and your willingness to make needed repairs. Try to decide new or used so you can focus your fact finding / shopping in 1 direction. This will save you time and aggravation.

### **If buying pre-owned...**

Ask these questions:

What repairs does the unit need? If so, how much will they cost to have done here?  
Is the unit guaranteed in any way? If so... by who?  
How many hours are on the engine? (the average boat is used 75-100 hrs per year in the south)  
Was it used in fresh or salt water? (salt water is a little tougher on the units than fresh)  
Was the boat ever involved in an accident or sank?  
Ask if you can have a mechanic come and inspect the unit?

Some things to look for or be aware of:

- A water or scum line inside the bilge of the boat indicating the boat may have sank.
- Engine block showing evidence of major tear down like gasket sealer that is not painted from the factory.
- Corrosion on electrical connections on the battery or in the rear of the boat.
- Excessive corrosion on the engine or trailer components.
- Cracks, gouges or scrapes on hull. Color differences on fiberglass indicating a repair was made.
- Damage to rub rail.

If you find anything in less than normal working order, use this old car dealer trick to lower the price...

**SECRET: The Silent Objection** - As you view the boat, motor and trailer with the salesperson, pause and touch each item that isn't right like a scratch or a missing item. Don't say anything, just pause and touch as you go. This will lower the perceived value in the seller's mind and possibly help you to purchase at a lower price. You can "jog their memory" later if need be during your negotiation.

Shopping Work Sheet

Remember Chapter 3!	Dealer 1	Dealer 2	Dealer 3
Dealer Name			
Dealer Phone			
Dealer Contact Person			
Boat make & model & year			
Engine make & HP & year			
Trailer make & type & year			
Hull Condition			
Engine Condition			
Trailer Condition			
Positives			
Negatives			
Asking Price			
Comparable asking prices of similar units			
My offer			

Note: Once you have completed some shopping and narrowing down your choices, call 772 466-3119 or [email](#) me. I will help you make a decision and guide you to the best deal.

## Do Your Homework

Visit popular sites where new and pre-owned boats are listed for sale. Visit [www.boattrader.com](http://www.boattrader.com), [www.iboats.com](http://www.iboats.com) and [www.boats.com](http://www.boats.com) for actual asking prices. Get a feel for what you have to spend for the type and age boat you want. Remember the prices you see are usually what the seller wants and rarely what the seller gets. Economic and seasonal conditions play a big part here as well.

### The Private Seller Fact Finding Phone Call

The purpose of this step is to find out as much information as possible before you go to see the boat:

- Was the boat ever involved in an accident or sank?
- Does the boat have any fiberglass work or need any fiberglass work from previous repairs?
- Are there any scratches dents, dings, etc. anywhere on the boat, motor or trailer?
- Is there an accurate hour meter on board?
- Has anything ever been repaired on the boat? Why? Do they have repair receipts?
- Should any major repairs be done on the boat now – engines, trailer, pumps, 12v Systems etc?
- Do they have service reports?
- Do they have manuals for the boat, motor or trailer?
- How long have they owned the boat? How many owners has the boat had?
- Do they have the title and is it a clean or is it salvage?

The more “issues” you can uncover will help you get the right price for the right boat. When asking about scratches, if the answer is yes, ask more about it (How big is it? Where is it? How many scratches are there? How did they get there? etc). If you are still interested in the boat, after being satisfied with the answers, the next question is "How negotiable are you?" You should emphasize that you are serious buyer. Do not make your final offer over the phone, leave room for more after you see the boat and re-evaluate it, factoring its physical and mechanical condition.

### Sample negotiations

Here are some sample negotiation scenarios of what the conversation over the phone might be like: Buyer would use the phone conversation to find out the details regarding the boat and decide whether to pursue the offer.

Options regarding communication between the seller and potential buyer:

- **If the seller states that he is not very negotiable** this means that there is limited price variation which can be acceptable for him. Potential buyer should act seriously without making final offer over the phone without evaluating the boat.
- **If seller offers the buyer to come and see the boat and then discuss the price** buyer should continue the conversation in order to see how negotiable the seller is. If the seller is unsure of the real boat value this approach would not result in attaining the desired price.
- **If the seller states that price is not negotiable** potential buyer should show that he is serious and knowledgeable with enough money and firm intention not to waste any time. This approach would bring him a better idea how negotiable the buyer is.
- **Further communication options could include** the seller that may not disclose some information on purpose or due to his being not aware of it. Should the car be damaged the potential buyer would need to see it before making any offer.
- **Phone negotiations** would yield some information on the car condition and how firm the price is. Should all this info obtained make the buyer interested he would need to find out if his offer described as around

value would be negotiable by the seller. Sellers usually wish to sell ASAP and are willing to take less and be done with the sale. However, this rarely happens over the phone.

- **If you find the boat of your dreams but the price is too high**, you may choose to leave your contact information and ask to be contacted should the owner decide to sell the boat for less.

### **What would I need to do to sell you a boat today?** (and other tricks)

Bait and Switch...

Defined by the Federal Trade Commission as "An alluring but insincere offer to sell a product or service which the advertising in truth does not intend to sell". Don't fall for this one. Have the advertisement in hand, ask for the specific unit advertised, if they don't have it, leave.

Pricing Games...

Unscrupulous dealers occasionally employ salespeople that play pricing games. Although there are times when 1 boat costs more than another and they are similar or identical, generally speaking, you shouldn't have to pay more because you choose one over another of the same model.

Credit Bureau Misuse...

You can't see the boat without a credit check. Most of us wouldn't fall for this one but I've seen it before. I've also seen situations where dealers will run your credit without your permission. My advice is never divulge your personal information to anyone unless you plan on buying something.

Exorbitant Doc Fees...

Anyone who has had the pleasure of standing in never ending lines at their local tag office would gladly pay for the service of having this done for them. It's when a dealer charges \$599, \$699 or more that it gets out of hand.

The Low Ball...

Here they sell you the boat at or near cost and charge inflated prices for everything else you buy. Often adding freight, prep fees and rigging fees adds to the overall profit of the deal. You however end up with a not so great deal.

## **Q & A's about Boat Insurance**

Congratulations! You bought a new boat and now you have to insure it. Here a few questions and answers to help you in your decision.

### **Q. What insurance coverage's should I look for?**

A. All companies have different coverage's and exclusions and if you purchase from a marine insurance specialist, they usually only sell the better policies. At minimum you will want an agreed value policy vs. an actual cash value policy. You can compare coverage's online or over the phone. Ask for their advice, they are professional insurance agents and want you to be satisfied. There's plenty of competition and they all want your business and referrals if you're a good risk.

### **Q. Where is the best place to shop around for a good value in boat insurance?**

A. It is best to find a boat insurance specialist in the market. Some have web sites where you can shop online in the privacy of you own home. One that is very popular is [Global Marine Insurance](#). They have several markets available in Florida and also do business in all lower 48 sates. You can submit a quote request online. REMEMBER, the lowest price isn't always the best value, unfortunately this lesson is often learned the hard way.

**Q. What if my dealer or lender recommends an agent?**

A. Usually a dealer or lender would not risk their reputation by referring to someone they do not have a lot of experience with and trust to take care of their customers. Most times they will refer customers to a boat insurance specialist, which should assure you of good coverage with a good value and service.

**Q. If I don't have to borrow money to buy the boat, do I really need insurance?**

A. YES! At the very least you should have watercraft liability to protect you from lawsuits and federally imposed liability for pollution. Further, many companies only cover salvage if you buy physical damage coverage. If your boat sinks in a navigable waterway the governing body may want it removed immediately and that can cost many thousands of dollars.

**Q. Are there restrictions or exclusions I should be aware of?**

A. Absolutely! Some companies may limit your navigation use to certain bodies of water. Some have far more exclusions than the "normal" policies. The only way to find out, is to read that section of the policy or ask your agent. Many companies also require detailed hurricane plans and also offer different kinds of named storm deductibles, make sure you really understand how your deductible applies, how much it is and under what circumstances it is required.

**Q. Does my credit score make a difference in boat insurance like it does in car insurance?**

A. Yes, many companies are now using what they call an "insurance scoring" method to rate a policy. It includes your credit score and other factors that are proven to predict loss potential.

**Q. What can I do to get the best rate from a good company?**

A. Be ready to give good answers to the underwriter's questions. If you have ownership or operating experience, describe it fully. Companies love experienced owners with good driving records, good credit, no losses and no irresponsible young operators. Those factors will produce the "best" rate. Whatever you do, tell the whole story and the truth. Don't fudge it, it can hurt you in the end.

For a professional experience and a great quote online visit [Global Marine Insurance](#) .



[Click Here](#)

Thank you for your interest in boating! It is the only activity that involves all ages from 1 to 100 and it really is affordable. If you are shopping for a power boat, new or pre-owned, please check out my dealerships at [www.topnotchmarine.com](http://www.topnotchmarine.com). Our sales staff is ready to help you find the boat of your dreams at a price you can afford. Since 1987, boat sales and service has been a major part of my life and the love of boating is what keeps me going.

If you would like to ask a question or would like me to help you find a boat please feel free to [email](mailto:), call 772 466-3119, or visit anytime. See you on the water!

Jim Sabia



[Top Notch Marine](#) is a full service boat dealer located in Fort Pierce and Melbourne Florida. We sell service and [finance](#) over 1000 [new](#) and [pre-owned](#) boats from 10 to 35 feet per year. We are authorized dealers for all outboard and stern drive engine brands, [Bayliner](#) sport boats, [Trophy](#) fishing boats, [Sea Fox](#), [Key West](#), and [Largo](#) Fishing boats, [Bentley](#) and [Sweetwater](#) Pontoons, [Glass Master](#) family boats, and [Nautic Star](#) deck and bay boats.

We offer shopping services that are FREE to the buyer. Save time and money, we will find the boat of your dreams for you! No matter what make, new or used. We offer easy [financing](#) services for buyers regardless of where you purchase your boat.

Have a boat you need to sell? [Consignment and advertising services](#) are available as well. Save time and money by advertising with us. We utilize a network of 26 website including, boat trader, boats.com, usedboats.com and many others.

Thank You!