

Life Skills Literacy

**Things to Know
About Cars and Driving**

by Richard S. Kimball
illustrated by Cecile Bayon

J. WESTON
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To the Teacher

Things to Know About Cars and Driving is another title in the growing *Life Skills Literacy* series from J. Weston Walch, Publisher. *Things to Know* books are reproducible and thematic compilations of information aimed at youth and adult English language learners, including ESL students new to American or Canadian culture. *Things to Know* books are intended to help build vocabulary, expand culturally-based knowledge, and develop real-life and survival skills. *Things to Know* books include interactive, authentic, cooperative, and idiomatic materials and activities. *Things to Know* books lead to success in the language and success in the classroom, the family, and the community.

The *Life Skills Literacy* series is appropriate for ESL learners at intermediate levels and for native learners reading at the fourth grade level and higher. Its vocabulary lists include more than 330 words and phrases, most of them specifically related to cars. Illustrative and contextual clues offer assistance with lexical development. Verb forms are generally simple, and the use of passive voice is limited.

The pages of *Things to Know About Cars and Driving* and its companion books can help individual students build reading and writing proficiencies. They can help full classes and small groups of students develop speaking and listening competencies as well. They can help all learners understand cars and driving, and explore related subjects like public transportation.

Their brevity and focus make *Things to Know* titles excellent resources for tutors working with individual students, whether the books are also used in the classroom or not. Their basic level makes *Things to Know* suitable to a

wide range of circumstances and student abilities. Their controlled language and high-interest topics give *Things to Know* appeal for students as well as teachers.

Like other *Things to Know* books, this one devotes three pages to each of 24 lessons. The first of the three is for teachers. It provides information and suggestions ranging from general concept considerations to specific Internet sites you and your students might visit. The second and third pages are reproducible, for student use. The second presents topic information and a dialogue, story, or student challenge relating to it. The third includes a word list plus writing and discussion activities for individual, small group, and full class use.

This book cannot cover all automotive vocabulary or all car topics of possible concern to students. Nor can it be designed to be exactly at the level of each and every student. But it can be and is very flexible, covering the basics at a consistently low reading level and then offering numerous ideas for moving beyond and providing extension activities to meet a wide range of classroom and personal needs. General ideas for materials use and adaptation appear on the following page of Teaching Suggestions. More specific suggestions can be found on the teacher page provided with each lesson.

We believe you will find the Walch *Life Skills Literacy* series and its individual *Things to Know* titles useful with many different students in many different settings. We'll be pleased to hear how well it works for you, to know what other titles you think should be added to it, and—as always—to learn what more this company can do to serve you and your students.

—J. Weston Walch, Publisher

Teaching Suggestions

You can use *Things to Know About Cars and Driving* basically as is, having learners work through the two reproducible pages of each topic in one or two class sessions. Or you can make *Things to Know* the core of a broader approach to cars and driving by following the many suggestions in the topical Teacher Pages and expanding each lesson to cover several sessions.

The first step in deciding how to use these pages is, of course, assessing the needs, interests, and abilities of your learners. The second step is considering the characteristics of your own community. Wherever you teach, you'll find that your classes benefit most when knowledge of local laws and transportation systems is added to the *Things to Know* mix.

The "Preparation possibilities" of the Teacher Pages provide some ideas of what you might wish to do in advance to enrich your classes, particularly if you are presenting a lesson over several class sessions. But these pages are designed for immediate use, and you need not spend hours preparing for their presentation. If you think local information will be helpful to your groups, follow the suggestions of the teaching pages and assign students to do the research. They will become true learners and enjoy themselves as well when they discover the practical value of outside projects. Or invite outsiders to join the class and talk about such complex matters as insurance.

Some of the "Technology resources" suggested on the Teacher Pages assume an Internet connection and use of a search engine like Yahoo to look for information and suggested Web pages.

Each word list contains between 12 and 15 terms. Those about cars avoid the highly technical and should interest all consumers and drivers. The more general terms are all important to the passages in which they occur, and have been selected with reference to readability levels and vocabulary frequency-use studies. In some cases, you may want to adjust the lists to help meet the needs and interests of your own students. You can underline the words you wish to stress, tape over those you don't want, and add others you find useful. But be careful not to eliminate terms required for the fill-in sentences that follow.

The idioms and slang and the "fascinating facts" given in the teacher pages are presented as fun and informative extras for some classes. If you use the idioms and slang, consider asking students to try them in sentences and to share other terms they know. You can treat the word lists in the same way, if you like, asking students to build sentences around them and to supply related vocabulary that interests them.

All materials on the Activity Pages have been prepared with references to varied thinking skills, learning styles, and the several intelligences proposed by Howard Gardner and others. But no mix can be perfect for every class, and these also can and should be adjusted to meet the needs of your own groups. The role-plays based on dialogues, stories, and challenges are useful examples. Some students with very limited language skills will benefit from working in pairs and reading dialogues aloud to each other. More advanced students will enjoy and benefit from more creative approaches in which they make up their own parts and decide what might happen next to the characters in the story.

Lesson 8: Shopping for Cars



Themes:

- Finding a good buy in cars
- Using self-knowledge to avoid bad purchases

Background notes: If you have ever been personally bitten by the new/used car bug, you know the temptations your students face. Dealers use every attraction they can think of to lure customers into purchases. Even their own senses can work against customers' better instincts as they smell the new car smells and hear the satisfying "thunk" of tight doors closing. (See Activity 4 under "Things to Do" on page 24.) Among the things that can help car shoppers are product knowledge, familiarity with sales practices, and self-understanding. These pages touch on all those topics.

Preparation possibilities:

- Think about: the sales techniques you have experienced when shopping for cars; visiting a dealership with a small group of students

Technology resources:

- Search topics: *car dealers* (by geographic area)
- Web pages to try: Consumer's Checkbook, Edmund's (car prices, information)

Student pages:

- Page 23 includes: an illustration of a used car lot; thoughts about shopping for cars; and a story about shopping for cars and shoppers' self-understanding
- Page 24 includes: a word list you may adjust for your class and student activities

Especially for ESL: New learners may not understand that real negotiation is expected and accepted in many car dealerships. Ask: Could you bargain about prices in your first country for cars? Other items?

Extra idioms and slang to introduce:

- *Drive a hard bargain:* negotiate effectively and win a good deal
- *Sticker shock:* the dismay people feel when seeing the high prices on stickers in car windows

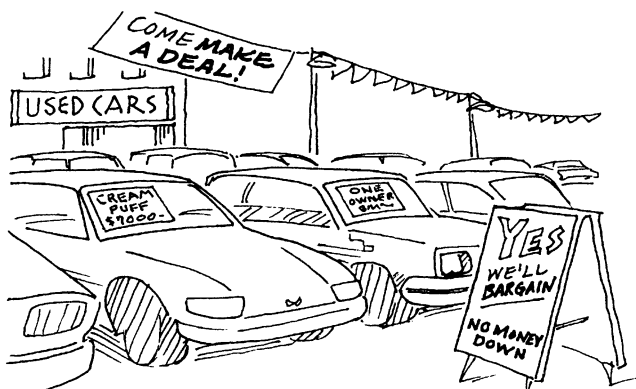
Thoughts to share with learners: It is sometimes best to shop for cars by visiting lots and looking at prices when dealerships are closed—on Sundays in many areas. That way you avoid sales pressure. It may seem that you must have that one special car you have found. But if the price isn't right, forget it. That feeling will go away, and there are a lot of cars for sale out there. Car buyers can sometimes save money by going where the bargains are, instead of insisting on only one popular make and model of car.

Questions to ask learners: How good are you at resisting sales pressure? Can you walk out of a dealership or store if a salesperson is pushing too hard? What can you do to get better?

Projects to assign learners: Visit a car dealership. Listen to salespeople and their customers. What do salespeople do to get customers interested? To close deals? How do you shop for cars without being pressured? What can you do to understand yourself better?

A fascinating fact to share: Car manufacturing was the fastest-growing industry in history, at least until the invention of computers.

Lesson 8: Shopping for Cars



To drive a car safely and well, you need good training and a lot of experience. To shop for a car and get a good buy, you need a lot of knowledge. You need to **investigate** cars, dealerships, and car loans. If you don't, you might buy a car that isn't very good. Or you might pay too much for the car you get. Or you might choose a car you can't afford.

Story: "I Need to Stop Shopping!"

On Saturday I asked my friend Alex if I could help him look for a car. "We'll do some quick **comparison shopping**," I said. "No **pressure** to buy. Just looking."

"Not me," he said. "I want to stop shopping for a car."

"But why? I know you want a car."

"Yes," he said, "but I can't afford one."

"But you can look and learn about cars now," I said. "Then you'll know what to get later."

"I do need to know more about cars," he answered. "But I already know a lot about me. My **negotiating** skills aren't so hot, and sometimes I can't say no."

"You mean you might get a car that costs too much."

"Right. If I find a **bargain** I might let some salesperson talk me right into a **contract**. Then there would be some sort of expensive **maintenance agreement**. Even if I didn't need it because the **warranty** would cover the car for at least six months. So I'm trying to stop shopping."

"Trying? You make it sound hard."

"It is," he answered. "I see cars for sale everywhere. They are in the newspaper's **classified** ads and the **display** ads. They are on television. They are at the dealerships when I ride by on the bus. They are on the roads with "for sale" signs on them. Some of them are great! So I'm staying away."

"I think you're wise," I told him. "A good salesperson might **convince** you to spend more than you should."

"That happened last year," he said. "I am still paying for some furniture I bought. So it's no car for now."

"That's a good lesson."

"It's an expensive lesson."



Lesson 8: Shopping for Cars



Word List

make a deal	comparison shopping	bargain	warranty	convince
money down	pressure	contract	classified	
investigate	negotiating	maintenance agreement	display	

Increasing Your Understanding

1. Look at the word list. If you don't know a word, find out what it means. Try to figure it out from the way it is used on page 23. Or look it up in a dictionary.
2. Supply the missing words from the word list:
 - (a) In the story on page 23, a friend asks Alex to do some quick _____.
 - (b) After the contract, Alex said that there might be some sort of _____.
 - (c) He wouldn't need the maintenance agreement if the car had a _____.
 - (d) Alex says his _____ skills aren't so hot.
 - (e) The paragraph at the top of the page says you need to _____ cars, dealerships and car loans before you buy a car.

Questions to Discuss

1. Do you think it was better for Alex not to shop for cars? Or was he being silly?
2. Do a lot of people buy things when they shouldn't? What can they do to avoid that?
3. How often do you see or hear car ads? Is it every day? Which ads do you think are best? Why? Can ads really convince you to buy things you should not get?

Things to Write About

1. How do you learn best? When you want to learn about things like cars, what do you do? Read? Listen to a friend? Look at cars? Write a paragraph saying how you like to learn things.
2. Did you ever buy anything you should not have? How did it happen? Tell the story.

Things to Do

1. Act out the story on page 23 with a partner. Use your own words if you want. Decide what you think might happen next if Alex went to a car dealer. Write down your ideas.
2. How would you sell cars if you were a dealer? Brainstorm with some classmates. Find things that appeal to senses like hearing and smelling. Decide at least three things to do.
3. Make a short radio play about a salesperson putting pressure on a customer. The customer likes a car but can't afford it. The salesperson says to buy it anyway.
4. Look at some car dealerships. Which look like the best places to shop? Why? If you can't go to the dealerships, look at their ads in a newspaper. Tell your classmates what you think.



Lesson 9: Advice About Cars



Word List

advice	honor	Internet	consumer	reliable
authorities	guarantee(s)	access	financing	pile of junk
according to	imagine	Web site(s)	frequency of repair	

Increasing Your Understanding

1. Look at the word list. If you don't know a word, find out what it means. Try to figure it out from the way it is used on page 26. Or look it up in a dictionary.
2. Supply the missing words from the word list:
 - (a) The second friend in the story on page 26 hears that one dealership won't honor its _____.
 - (b) The first friend says the library has computers with _____ access.
 - (c) The Internet can lead to Web sites and good _____ advice.
 - (d) The paragraph at the top of the page says that _____ is cheap.
 - (e) Only some of the people who give advice are real _____.

Questions to Discuss

1. How did you answer the challenge on page 26? Do you know somebody who is an authority about cars? Where would you go for car advice?
2. Imagine that a good friend is giving you advice about buying a car. But you don't think your friend knows very much. What can you say?
3. What if two magazines disagree about one car model? One says it is great. The other says it isn't. How can you decide which is right?

Things to Write About

1. Did you ever follow bad advice about a car? About something else? Tell the story.

2. Can you give advice about buying a used car? What if a friend asked you how to get started? Write a letter to that friend.

Things to Do

1. Act out the story on page 26 with a partner. Use your own words if you want. Imagine that the friends go to the library together. What do you think will happen there?
2. Make a list of five good ways to get advice about cars.
3. Make a poster for your local library. It should tell people to visit the library for information about cars.
4. Make up one question about cars. It might be something like this: "What is the safest car to drive?" Ask three people outside the class. Then report back to the class on what you learned.



Lesson 10: Maintaining Cars



Themes:

- The basics of maintenance
- Taking care of your own car

Background notes: Routine car maintenance is less burdensome than it used to be. Some auto manufacturers now claim that new cars can go 100,000 miles without a tune-up. That's because engines have changed so much. Electronic systems with no moving parts have replaced mechanical parts such as the often-temperamental carburetors. But even new cars are not maintenance-free. They still require such things as tire rotation, oil and filter changes, and replacement of belts according to manufacturers' recommendations. You can use these pages to help your students recognize this fact, to know how to care for their own vehicles, and to discuss good services in your area.

Preparation possibilities:

- Think about: maintenance services available in your area
- Bring to class: ads for low priced and competing maintenance services

Technology resources:

- Search topics: *auto maintenance*; specific services
- Web pages to try: The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence and links

Student pages:

- Page 29 includes: some recommendations about maintenance and a dialogue about how and where to get maintenance done
- Page 30 includes: a word list you may adjust for your class and student activities

Especially for ESL: You might wish to mention the difference between the metric and U.S. systems of measurement. Many ESL students may be accustomed to metrics—measuring oil in liters, for example, rather than quarts. Ask: How did you get car maintenance done in your first country?

Extra idioms and slang to introduce:

- *Top off*: add a little liquid to something that is almost full
- *Spare tire*: a roll of fat around a person's waist

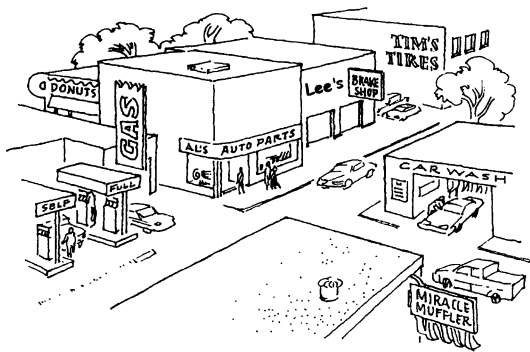
Thoughts to share with learners: It's easy for many of us to postpone such things as oil changes, especially when cash is short. But that can be costly in the long run. It's important to save records of all the maintenance services and repairs you get, to show buyers when you sell the car, or in case something goes wrong.

Questions to ask learners: Who in the class changes the oil in their own cars? Is it easy? Why do you do it? What does it mean to be "good with your hands"? Are you good with yours? How do people get that way? Where do you have your routine maintenance work done? What about repairs? Do you recommend these places? Do you pay an hourly labor charge? How much? Does that seem high? What does the money go for? Does the mechanic get it all?

Projects to assign learners: Research the cost of oil changes in your area. Ask the price of changing the oil and oil filter in a 1996 Ford Taurus. Who does the cheapest work? Share your information in class.

A fascinating fact to share: A brand-new car depreciates about 20 percent almost immediately after it is purchased.

Lesson 10: Maintaining Cars



Here are some maintenance **recommendations**. They will help you keep your car in good condition:

1. Drive carefully.
2. Do what your car manual says.
3. Learn about cars. Know what needs to be done.
4. Take your car to a good mechanic.

Dialogue: What Sam Does

Visitor: Hi, is Sam here? I've got something for him.

Occupant: Sam is out back. Look through this window. Those are his feet sticking out from under his car.

V: What's he doing?

O: He's **changing** the **oil** and the oil **filter**. Sam does all the maintenance work on his car.

V: That's what he told me. I guess he's taking a car repair course.

O: That's right. Last night he **rotated** the **tires**. This weekend he may do a whole **tune-up** and put in new **spark plugs**. He pays for parts, but he saves a lot in **labor charges**.

V: That sounds like a lot of work to me. But Sam said that finding other people to do the work is harder for him. He said that some mechanics are too busy, and some don't do good work. They have bad **reputations**.

O: It's hard to know where to take your car. Should you go to the **service department** at the dealer where you got it? To a mechanic at a garage? Or **specialty** places?

You know, a **repair shop** for the brakes and one for the muffler and one for tune-ups and one for tires?

V: I go to places like that. But I got new **drive belts** at my dealer last week. I'm no good at mechanics.

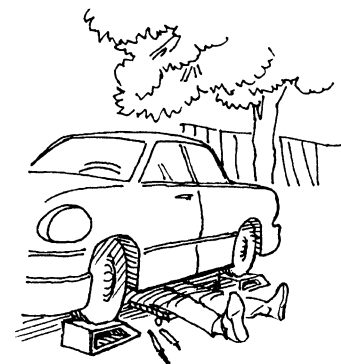
O: Sam is. He does everything he learns in school to his own car.

V: Has he studied tailpipes yet?

O: I think that's next week.

V: Good. Sam gave me a lift last night. And this morning I found part of his tailpipe in my **driveway**. That's what I want to give him.

O: I see Sam crawling out from under his car. So you can do that now. He'll be glad to have a job for next week.



Lesson 10: Maintaining Cars



Word List

recommendation(s)	tune-up	service department	driveway
changing oil	spark plug(s)	specialty	
filter	labor charge(s)	repair shop	
rotate(d) tires	reputation(s)	drive belt(s)	

Increasing Your Understanding

1. Look at the word list. If you don't know a word, find out what it means. Try to figure it out from the way it is used on page 29. Or look it up in a dictionary.
2. Supply the missing words from the word list:
 - (a) The list at the top of page 29 gives some maintenance _____.
 - (b) The occupant of the house says Sam is changing the oil and the oil _____.
 - (c) Part of Sam's tailpipe was found in the visitor's _____.
 - (d) The visitor uses _____ places for things like tune-ups and brake repairs.
 - (e) Sam knows of some poor mechanics with bad _____.

Questions to Discuss

1. Do you agree with the visitor that specialty places are good places to take a car? Are they better than the service departments of dealers? Why or why not?
2. What's the easiest way to learn about fixing cars? By doing it? By reading a book? By taking a course? Some other way? Do different things work best for different people?
3. How can cars become unsafe if they are not well maintained? What can happen then?

a record showing that the first owner did the maintenance just right. The other costs \$4,000. It looks good, but it has no record. Will you take a chance and get the cheaper car? Write a paragraph saying what you will do and why.

Things to Do

1. Act out the story on page 29 with a partner. Use your own words if you want. Decide what you think Sam might do to his car next.
2. Make a list of five things people need to do to maintain their cars.
3. Make up a radio ad for a shop named Oliver's Oil Changes. Make it a song if you want to. Say it or sing it to the class the way you would give a real radio ad.
4. What kind of specialty-car shops are there in your area? Look around outside of class and make a list. Then share it with the class.

Things to Write About

1. Imagine that you take your car for an oil change. On the way home, you hear a strange noise. You look under the hood and find an empty oil container. Write what you will tell the mechanic.
2. Imagine that you can choose between two used cars. One costs \$5,000. It comes with

