



The Deal After the Deal

Inside the finance office: your rate, your term, the add-on menu, and every line on the contract you sign last.

WHAT THEY EARN

WHAT TO BUY

WHAT TO SIGN

From a buyer's advocate who has worked both sides of the desk, and now only works yours.

CAMPINGWITHSQUATCH.COM

What's in this chapter

Chapter 1 got you to a fair out-the-door price. This one gets you through the room where that price turns into a loan.

1 · UNDERSTAND

How the finance office makes its money, and why it's so friendly.

2 · PREPARE

Bring your own loan, and pick a term you can live with.

3 · CHOOSE

Sort the add-on menu into worth it, shop it, and skip it.

4 · SIGN

Read the four boxes that tell the truth, then sign.

1 A Word From Squatch

The handshake isn't the end of the deal. It's halftime

2 How the Finance Office Makes Money

Where the second half of the profit comes from

3 Your Rate: Buy Rate and Sell Rate

The rate you were approved for and the rate you're offered

4 Bring Your Own Loan

Pre-approval, credit checks, and the one sentence that sets the rate

5 The Term Trap

Ten years, fifteen, twenty, and what "upside down" really means

6 The Menu

How add-ons are presented, and the three-light system, finance edition

7 Product by Product

Service contracts, GAP, tire and wheel, protection, and the rest

8 Service Contracts, All the Way Down

The biggest item on the menu, and the ten questions to ask first

9 Reading the Contract

The four federal boxes, the itemization, and "conditional delivery"

10 One Loan, Two Buyers

Same camper. \$18 a month apart. \$36,806 apart

11 The Game Plan

Step by step, from your kitchen table to the last signature

12 Worksheets & Pocket Cards

Loan shopping, the menu decision, and the contract check

13 Finance Office Dictionary

Reserve, spread, the box, and the rest of the back-room words

A fair warning about numbers. Every dollar figure and rate in this guide is an example or a commonly reported range, not a quote, not a rate offer, and not a promise. Rates change week to week, and lending rules and taxes vary by state. I'm a buyer's advocate, not a lender, an attorney, or a tax professional, so for anything legal or tax-related, check with a qualified professional. Where I've used outside numbers, the sources are listed on the last page.

What a 1.5-point spread costs

Our example buyer is financing **\$32,000 for 15 years**. Say the lender approves them at **7.49%** and the finance office offers **8.99%**. (Both rates are examples. Yours depend on your credit and the market.)

\$32,000 for 15 years	Monthly payment	Total interest
Buy rate, 7.49%	\$296.46	\$21,362.80
Sell rate, 8.99%	\$324.37	\$26,386.60
What the spread costs you	\$27.91 a month	\$5,023.80

Twenty-eight dollars a month doesn't feel like much at a desk at 6:30 on a Saturday. Over fifteen years it's **more than five thousand dollars**, for the same camper, the same lender, and the same buyer. Nothing about the loan got better. It just got more expensive.

The rate isn't a fact about you. It's a price.

And prices can be shopped.

How common is it?

Most of the research on this is about car loans, and RV finance offices work the same way. A 2023 MIT analysis of dealer-arranged auto loans found that **about 78% carried a markup, averaging a little over one percentage point**. Lenders usually cap the markup, commonly at about **2 to 3 percentage points**, depending on the lender and state law.

Is it legal? Generally, yes, within the lender's cap. It isn't a hidden fee in the way a junk fee is. It's the dealer's price for arranging the loan. But it's a price most buyers never knew they were paying, and that's the part I want to change.

10 years

\$379.68 / MO

\$13,562 interest

12 years

\$337.50 / MO

\$16,600

15 years

\$296.46 / MO

\$21,363

20 years

\$257.59 / MO

\$29,822

TOTAL INTEREST ON \$32,000 AT 7.49%

Going from 15 years to 20 lowers the payment by \$38.87 a month and adds \$8,458.80 in interest. Going from 10 years to 20 saves \$122.09 a month and costs \$16,260 more. In real life the longer loan often carries a higher rate, too, which makes the gap bigger than this.

Remember the ad from Chapter 1 that said "\$247 a month"? This is how that number gets made. A small payment isn't a small price. It's a big price, cut into a lot of pieces.

SAY THIS

"Show me the payment and the total of payments at 10, 12, and 15 years, side by side."

The total of payments is printed on every loan contract by federal law (Section 9). Asking for it up front keeps the conversation on what the camper really costs.

What "upside down" means on a camper

Upside down means you owe more on the camper than it's worth. It matters the day you want to sell it, trade it, or, worst case, the day it's totaled. If you owe \$30,000 and it's worth \$24,000, you have to come up with the other \$6,000 before you can walk away.

Campers lose value fast. J.D. Power reports that an RV loses **nearly 25% of its value once it's purchased**, and that a travel trailer is worth about **60% of what you paid after five years**. Loans, especially long ones, pay down slowly at first, because the early payments are mostly interest. Put those two facts together and you get this:

Here's how it looks with our example. The bare loan, \$32,000 at 8.99% for 15 years, is **\$324.37 a month**. The finance manager says, "We got you approved, and your payment is **\$401.21**." You expected something around \$400 anyway, so it sounds about right. Hidden inside it is **\$7,580 of products**, financed for 15 years.

Product (example price)	Price	Added to payment	Cost over 15 years
Extended service contract, 5 years	\$4,995	\$50.63	\$9,113.40
GAP	\$895	\$9.07	\$1,632.60
Tire and wheel	\$695	\$7.05	\$1,269.00
Interior and exterior protection	\$995	\$10.09	\$1,816.20
All four	\$7,580	\$76.84	\$13,831.20

Seventy-seven dollars a month. **Thirteen thousand eight hundred thirty-one dollars** by the last payment, for products that cost \$7,580, several of which will have expired years before the loan does.

! This really happens.

In 2022, the Federal Trade Commission and the state of Illinois took action against a group of car dealerships accused of charging buyers for add-ons, like paint protection, that they hadn't agreed to buy. The settlement sent \$9.8 million back to buyers and required the dealerships to get each customer's express, informed consent before charging for add-ons.

SAY THIS

"Before we go further, what's the payment for just the loan, with nothing else added?"

If that number is lower than the one you were just given, something was added. Ask what, and ask for it to come off.

FROM BEHIND THE DESK

"The bank requires it." You may be told that a service contract or GAP is required to get approved. Lenders rarely require add-ons, and a dealer can't make an optional product mandatory just by saying so. If you hear it, say: "Could you show me where the lender requires it, in writing?" Most of the time, the requirement goes away.