

Craigslist Best Practices and Successful Posting Guidelines

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Part 1 – Posting for Success

Suggested Craigslist Posting Guidelines

- There is no “magic number” of how many posts you can do in any given day, or in any given sitting. This number will vary over time within each market, and each Craigslist market regulates their ad volume differently.
- Before you starting, we suggest that you investigate your local Craigslist Car + Truck – by Dealer listings and identify the current trends in that market (i.e., see the amount of dealer listings added per day, the number of ads posted by each dealer, etc.). Plan your posting goals accordingly. For example, if your market posts no more than 6 ads per day, adjust your posting schedule to accommodate your Craigslist market.
- Start conservatively. Unless your current market volume suggests otherwise, post no more than 5-10 in any given day.
- Spread your postings out over the course of the day. Add no more than a few posts at a time, a couple of times a day. This will ensure two key things:
 1. Your ads will not appear all together in a solid block drawing attention from those who might flag them.
 2. As your earlier posts are dropping down in the listings you will be posting new vehicles that will ensure you always have ads closer to the top of search results being viewed.
- Create a dedicated Craigslist account used to post ads, the account is free, easy to setup and will help you keep track of your postings over time.
- Vary the templates used to post ads within each posting session.
- Do not post your entire inventory live on Craigslist at one time. Over-posting may result in getting flagged by other users and readers.
- Develop a rotation for posting that will help you list your full used inventory over the course of a week or longer (rather than daily).
- Your goal should be consistent exposure over time with regular posting instead of on-again, off-again posting trying to generate peaks of traffic that come and go.
- Coordinate posting efforts to make sure that everyone understands the limitations and guidelines. Do not duplicate efforts or over-post ads.

Remember, even though the tool saves time and makes posting easier, we are still subject to the posting requirements and guidelines of Craigslist (outlined in the [Terms of Use](#)). As each local Craigslist is moderated by a different team, make sure you understand the ins-and-outs of successful posting so you can develop a strategy that works well for you in your area.

Things to Remember About Craigslist

Please always refer to the Help Pages on Craigslist for the most up-to-date information regarding posting habits, strategies, etc.

<http://www.craigslist.org/about/help/>

Some key items are listed here:

- Only post in one Craigslist area: Do not post the same ad in more than one area at the same time. Craigslist has methods in place for monitoring a poster's habits and posting areas.
- Post as a commercial dealer: Auto ads posted by a commercial dealer in the Cars & Trucks category must be indicated as being sold by a Dealer as opposed to an Owner.
- Do not post too many vehicles at one time: It is prohibited by Craigslist to over-post or to post too many ads in a given day. Craigslist suggests only posting once every 48 hours. Some dealers post as many as 10 to 15 ads per day, or more. Whether or not a dealer will be flagged for over-posting depends entirely on their posting habits and how they are viewed by the Craigslist community in their local area. Craigslist members may flag over-posting users for removal of the ad.

Due to the nature of Craigslist, there is no exact figure or science involved in determining what your posting limit will be. A moderately-paced posting campaign could get a lot of initial exposure, and will also test the waters, giving you an idea of the volume you will be able to post in your area. Keep in mind the total amount of posted ads to your market daily. If your market adds 6 new listings per day, adjust your posting schedule so that you do not exceed this amount.

You will know when you have reached the upper-limit of posts for your area if you start to get flagged by users. Once this happens, consider this the max amount you should be posting on a regular basis, and reduce the quantity of ads to fall below this threshold.

Don't try to continually fight flagging by posting more ads or you will find yourself in a constant state of getting flagged and removed by Craigslist, which will limit your ability to use the system effectively.

Do not post the same vehicle more than once at a time:

If the Craigslist database finds a duplicate ad for any given vehicle it will automatically block the new posting from going live. If a new vehicle posting for a car already listed does manage to pass through Craigslist's filters, the Craigslist community might notice the duplication and flag one or both ads for removal.

If you want to re-post the vehicle, be sure to delete the previous/old listing for it before posting again. The easiest way to make sure you do not duplicate postings is to simply delete & repost the Craigslist ad from within your Craigslist account. This will ensure you remove the old ad before reposting the vehicle, and you don't even need to open the posting tool to do it!

Occasionally, the Craigslist system may not let you repost an ad for that vehicle for 24-48 hours, and may tell you there's already a "similar ad" posted. If this happens, simply wait a day or so and try posting that vehicle again.

More Tips:

- Do not post external web links leading to outside websites:
Most strictly speaking, in the “for sale” section of the list, there should not be any external links leading to a business' website. The only section where this is allowed is within the “services” section. It is possible to place links in your ads using the posting templates, and one of our templates contains a link to the vehicle’s detail page on your dealer website. If you use links sparingly, they should not work to your disadvantage, but you do so at your own risk. If you are using a link in your ads and getting flagged, try removing them.
- Be accurate and detailed in your ads:
Gain the trust of the buyer by posting everything they would need to know about a vehicle. It will help to further qualify any leads that may be generated by a given posting. It is important to keep the focus on the long term goal of generating sales opportunities by finding qualified potential buyers. If their questions are answered by the ad, then the bulk of generated leads will be from qualified buyers.
- Post good photos:
Providing a good amount of quality photos is an absolute must. A dealer should treat posting photos as an opportunity to show online what they would show a buyer on the showroom floor.
- Refresh ads regularly:
Craigslist ads will stay live for between 7 and 45 days, depending on the area in which they are posted, but Craigslist now allows you to renew the post from your account page 48 hours after it’s posted. This will return the ad to the top of the local Craigslist. The Planned Post Duration indicator under each post in the Autoclick Craigslist Post Tool will help you keep track of how long your ads have been in the system, and thus when they need to be renewed.

Don’t leave ads up for their entire life-cycle until they expire on their own:

While ads will stay live for 7 or 45 days before expiring, they are not always getting the best exposure they can beyond the first couple of days.

Craigslist posts move down in search results in real-time as new ads come on. An ad can find its way down to the second, third, or even fourth page of ads within the first day or so, depending on the market area.

While older vehicles farther down in the listings will still display in a specific search for that vehicle type, chances are that ads this far down will not be viewed by casual users who are just browsing the first couple of pages to see if anything interests them.

In some areas that are slower-paced, like some of the markets where ads stay for 45 days, the listings may just be slow enough that ads will actually stay on the first couple of pages for most of the posting life of the ad. Only after posting some ads for yourself and monitoring the movement in your local listings can you get an accurate feel for how often you should delete and re-post your ads.

- Post inventory in cycles
The more often you post the more successful your ads will be. Develop a posting plan that allows for the bulk of your inventory to sit close to the top of the list at all times. Do this by posting conservatively and rotating old ads as mentioned above while constantly introducing a few new vehicles each day or so. Unless you have a dozen or so vehicles (or less), **Do not** try to have your entire inventory on Craigslist at all times. Doing this increases the chance that your ads will get flagged and removed.

Use All Templates to Increase Success

It can be easy to latch onto a single sharp looking ad-layout and use it for all of your posts. There are definite advantages to using these different templates.

One reason to vary your templates when you post is to avoid having your ads flagged and potentially removed by other users, and from being blocked by Craigslist itself.

Submitting the same template multiple times may result in that template being blocked by Craigslist, and could cause your email address or your IP address itself to be blocked from posting in the future - either short-term or permanently. Rotating through the various templates available will help decrease the chance that your ads will be flagged and removed.

Using different ad layouts will make your ads more appealing and interesting for customers as well. Use the simpler template designs for older or lower-priced vehicles or in instances where you have more than one vehicle of a certain year, make, and model available. Use the larger, flashier templates with more pictures to *highlight* certain vehicles in your inventory that you want to draw attention to.

Part 2 – Problems & Troubleshooting Ads Getting Flagged? Ads Not Showing Up?

Flagging Basics

One unique aspect of Craigslist is the fact that it is community-moderated with no real oversight by Craigslist. The Craigslist community can flag, or select ads for removal. The reasons they might decide to flag are many, but one fact remains:

Flagging by the Craigslist community can cause your ads to be removed or for you to be blocked from posting!

While Craigslist does have certain filters in place for monitoring posting habits and ad contents, these filters are fairly forgiving and do not for the most part result in car dealer ads being flagged or removed – though they may cause ads to be blocked or ghosted from time to time.

Where the Problem Lies

If your ads are flagged or removed, this is **NOT** an issue with the posting tool itself. This is the result of the Craigslist community's response to your posting habits and practices, or to the ad content itself. When posting using our tool you are still subject to the posting guidelines of Craigslist, and the actions of other Craigslist users.

If you were flagged, one of the following probably happened:

- You posted too many ads in a short period of time, **as determined by the Craigslist community at that time**
- Either your posting habits or your ad content was considered to be in violation of the Craigslist posting guidelines by the viewers of the ads.

What happens:

One of the oddities of posting as a dealer to Craigslist is that in the majority of cases you might not even realize that you have been flagged or blocked until it is too late and your ads have been removed.

Craigslist does not send out warnings before you are blocked from posting, or notifications that you have been blocked.

How to know if you've been blocked from posting to Craigslist:

- You get an error message when you are trying to submit/place an ad.
- You are able to post ads, which live within your Craigslist account, and as though they are live in the listing as well, but they do not show up in the actual listings themselves. This phenomenon is known as "ghosting."

Signs you can look for:

- The first thing that happens is that Craigslist users will start flagging ads for one reason or another, most often for over-posting, ad content, or incorrect categorization.
- When a single ad has reached a certain number of flags from users (the actual number is unspecified by Craigslist and may change from time to time), the ad is then removed by Craigslist.
- When multiple ads are removed through this process, Craigslist will implement a temporary block, approximately 7-days long. Though you may be able to submit ads into the system, they will not "go live" and show up in the listings until the block is removed. They will be "ghosted."
- When they implement this block, they may also remove any and all previous/current posts that you had posted on the system.

Recovering from a Block

Once this block is over, you will be able to resume posting. Please remember:

- Proceed with caution and post conservatively to avoid triggering another block.
- Start with a small number of posts and slowly increase the number and frequency of your posts over time to come closer and closer to your market's ideal posting volume.
- Stay conscious of your previous and current posting habits and do not fall back into the previous volume of posts that got you flagged previously.
- Stay well under the number of posts that got you flagged before.
- Be on the lookout for the warning signs that you might get blocked from posting again. i.e., be on the lookout for emails saying you have new ads that have been removed due to flagging.

Avoiding Being Blocked

- Follow these Suggested Posting Guidelines below.
- If you receive an email letting you know you had a new ad removed:
 - a) STOP POSTING IMMEDIATELY
 - b) If you had one ad removed because of flagging, chances are that your other ads that are still live are accruing flags as well, and it is only a matter of time before multiple ads get removed.
 - c) Wait 2-3 days before starting to post again, and follow the same steps listed above under “Recovering from a Block.”

None of the steps in this document are guaranteed to work, as every local Craigslist is different, and the posting environment changes quickly. Posting to Craigslist successfully is an art, and one that is nearly impossible to pin down perfectly, but by following the steps in this document you should get a little closer to success.