



Used Car Purchasing Tips

Almost all cars depreciate (go down in value) over time. The value of a new car can drop hundreds or even thousands of dollars the day you drive it off the car dealer's lot. By buying a used car, your initial cost will therefore be less than if it were new. Because used cars vary by mileage and condition, you may have more choices of similar vehicles at different price levels. This also makes checking for quality and reliability especially important.

Here are some tips for purchasing a used car or other vehicle:

1. If possible, set a morning appointment to see the car. That way you can find out how the vehicle starts before it's been warmed up.
2. Arrive at your appointment 15 to 20 minutes early to see if there's any last-minute "fixing" going on.
3. Take time to perform an inspection to your satisfaction. Don't be rushed. If you own a vehicle already, practice inspecting your own car. Get familiar with the process so you don't miss anything. (Later on if you decide you're interested in buying the vehicle—be sure to have it inspected by a certified mechanic. See #9, below.)
4. Go for a test drive!
5. Point out any flaws or problems with the car to the seller.
6. Ask to see the current car registration. Confirm the current ownership and ensure that the registration is paid and up-to-date.
7. Ask if there is an existing lien on the vehicle or if it was leased.
8. Consult a service like carfax.com to see if the vehicle has been in an accident and to make sure the owner has title to the vehicle. You will need the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN).
9. Before you agree to buy the vehicle, be sure to have it inspected by a certified mechanic. You may have to figure in necessary repairs to your costs of ownership.
10. Seriously consider purchasing an extended warranty for the vehicle. Research the reliability of the make and model by reading industry reviews and user-submitted comments on Web sites. This information will help you shop for a warranty that covers the kinds of problems your vehicle is likely to develop.