

Ten Tips for Buying a Used Car

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We've all heard the numbers before: when buying a car, buying used instead of new can mean the difference in thousands and thousands of dollars. Of course, the trade-off comes in the fact that often times you don't know exactly what you are getting when you buy used. Here are ten tips to reduce this risk and uncertainty in buying a used car:

1. **Do as much research as possible to narrow your options regarding the makes and models in which you have an interest.** Websites such as www.edmunds.com can be very helpful in finding information regarding reliability, car-life, etc.
2. **Further your search using websites such as www.autotrader.com and www.cars.com.** Once you have narrowed down your list to a couple of particular makes/models, online searches can be one of the most efficient ways to find specific autos currently for sale.
3. **Get a CarFax or AutoCheck report to check the history of the vehicle.** This report can give you information regarding estimated mileage, ownership history, and accident and repair history.
4. **Buy a certified pre-owned car.** While typically more expensive than other used cars, the peace of mind that comes with buying a certified pre-owned car can more than make up for the additional cost.
5. **Don't take what the seller says at face value.** Be a skeptic of all the claims the seller makes, regardless of how genuine that person seems. Seek proof of each of the seller's claims.
6. **Take a test drive.** Pay particular attention to acceleration from a stop, visibility, engine noise, braking, cornering, suspension, and any rattles and squeaks that the vehicle might make.
7. **Recognize, that generally speaking, the best value can be found in cars that are three to five years old.** At this point, the most rapid depreciation in value has already occurred, but yet the car typically has quite a few good years left in it.
8. **Use Kelley Blue Book and Edmunds to estimate the value of the used car.** This will give you at least a ballpark idea of what a car is worth, either as a trade-in or as a private-party sale.
9. **Have a mechanic physically inspect the car on a lift.** Without having an expert literally "get under the hood," you don't know exactly what kind of physical condition a particular car is in.
10. **Be very careful when filling out the paperwork for the car.** Make sure that the individual who signs the Bill of Sale is in fact the owner of the car. If buying through a dealership, make sure to read the fine print in the warranty and get any promises made in writing.

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