



WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN BUYING A USED CAR

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As you start shopping for your next ride, it's important to know what to look for when buying a used car. We want to make sure you drive home feeling good about your choice, which is why we put together this guide.

Let us outline some of the most crucial steps, offer some advice, and show you a few things to look out for, so you can proceed with your car-shopping adventure feeling completely confident.



GETTING STARTED

Searching for your next vehicle is sure to be an exciting time. You're likely dreaming about getting to drive around town and show off your purchase while you experience the joy of the open road. But don't let eagerness rush you through the car-shopping process.

Since you'll be spending many years driving your vehicle, you want to be sure you choose a used car that suits you. Take your time researching and inspecting the model you want to make sure you drive home feeling good about your purchase.

The best way to get started is with research. Take some time to sit down and look into various models while asking yourself what exactly it is you're looking for:

- **What body style do you want?**
- **What kind of safety and infotainment technology do you need?**
- **Are you looking for a specific make or model?**

As you answer these questions, investigate your options, and explore popular SUVs, sedans, trucks, and other body styles. Read reviews and find out what other people have to say about various models and features.



WRITE YOUR “MUST-HAVE” LIST

The beginning of your research is the perfect time to start crafting your must-have list. As you learn more about various models and their features, decide what you want in your dream vehicle. Maybe having a third row will be essential to fit in with your lifestyle or maybe you’d rather have a compact and speedy ride that can squeeze into small parking spaces.

Decide if you’d like to have a vehicle with high-tech features like push-button start and climate control and add that to your list. You can also explore the pros and cons of a manual transmission, automatic transmission, and CVT (continuously variable transmission), to see which transmission will best match your driving style.

If you’re able to narrow these things down early on, it will help you find a model that meets all your needs and can support your daily life.



CERTIFIED PRE-OWNED INVENTORY

As you shop for a used vehicle, it's worth considering the certified pre-owned inventory available at many dealerships. These models are a great middle ground between new and used models since they all must pass an extensive inspection to ensure they are in top condition.

Many manufacturers have their own certified programs for their pre-owned vehicles, and each program comes with unique benefits and features. However, they are all designed to offer advantages that make them extra appealing to shoppers looking for a high-quality used ride.

Certified pre-owned vehicles tend to be under a certain mileage limit and within a few model years, so you know they haven't faced excessive use. They'll also have to pass a multi-point inspection to make sure everything is up to standard.

To make sure you feel completely confident in your choice, these vehicles will usually come with an extra warranty. Plus, they'll typically have the vehicle history report ready and available for you to check out.



READ ABOUT YOUR MODEL

Once you've narrowed down your options, it's a good idea to look specifically into the model or models you're interested in. Learn more about what that car is typically valued at and find out if there are any specific issues you'll need to keep an eye out for.

To make sure the vehicle falls within your budget, you can use an **online payment calculator**. If you have a current vehicle you want to trade in, **research the trade-in value** of your vehicle and factor that in as well.

This is also the time to check with your used car dealer and learn about the model they have on their lot. You can talk to a member of the sales team to learn more about the features, capabilities, and history of the vehicle you're thinking about purchasing.

The vehicle history report is another excellent resource for this stage, so during this part of the research, you'll want to get access to the report for your model. While many dealerships tend to have this on hand for shoppers to access, you sometimes may need to look it up on your own. In this case, you'll simply need to search the VIN (vehicle identification number) on a vehicle history report site such as CARFAX®.

In general, the vehicle history report will highlight any major events in the vehicle's past.



Why Access the Vehicle History Report?

Looking through the vehicle history report will tell you if the car was involved in any accidents that resulted in structural damage or deployed airbags.

You can request documentation about the repairs to find out more about the kind of damage the vehicle experienced and how it was fixed. When you get the vehicle professionally inspected, you should mention this piece of history to the mechanic so they can look for any remaining issues and ensure the repairs were done correctly.

The vehicle history report will also tell you about **how many owners that model has had** and **when and where it was sold**. This report will also have a **record of the odometer reading**, which you can double-check with the vehicle when you visit it in person.

Additionally, this report will give you details about the vehicle's **service history**. When looking here, you might not see all the services performed on the vehicle, but it will typically show you anything major. Keep an eye out for any parts that have been replaced frequently, as that could be indicative of a larger problem.



AT THE DEALERSHIP

Whenever you're thinking about purchasing a vehicle, taking a test drive is essential. It's the time to make sure you feel comfortable behind the wheel of the exact model you plan to drive home.

With used cars, this stage is even more important. So, after you've finished with the preliminary research, visit your model in person and take it for a test drive at the dealership.

DURING THE TEST DRIVE

The test drive is the time to check if there are any bugs with the vehicle that might not be obvious from the outside or the vehicle history report. As you go through this process, there are all kinds of things you can keep an eye out for to check the vehicle's condition.

Before you even fully start the vehicle, you can leave the key in the accessory position to check that all the dashboard lights are operational.

As you drive, **listen for any engine noises, and make sure the brakes feel responsive.** You'll want to make sure that the vehicle shifts gears smoothly and that you enjoy the overall drive experience.

Consider the kind of places you tend to drive more, whether you take the highway to work each morning or spend more time on neighborhood streets. No matter your driving style, try to test the vehicle out in similar conditions.

To check and see that the vehicle doesn't have any leaks, leave the car parked and running for 30 seconds, then pull forward. If there's a puddle on the ground where you were parked, you'll want to talk to a team member or service technician to find out what caused it.



Conduct Your Own Inspection

Checking the performance abilities of your vehicle is an important part of the test drive. Even though you'll plan to get your used car **professionally inspected by a qualified technician, it's crucial to conduct your own inspection before you buy the vehicle, too.** So, in addition to experiencing the vehicle's performance abilities, take your time during the test drive to go over all aspects of the vehicle.

Take a look around the interior to make sure everything is up to your standard. As you look over the carpets and upholstery, **keep an eye out for signs of excessive wear and any weird smells.** If the interior smells musty, check the floor for signs of a leak or water damage. Additionally, check out the back seat and trunk of the vehicle and make sure those areas are also in good condition.

It's a good idea to check that the interior systems are working properly, too. Aside from testing the windshield wipers, turn signals, and emergency brake, take a **second to see if the air conditioning and heating systems are functioning.** What is the sound quality of the speakers? Does the infotainment system work?

If your vehicle comes with any unique features, such as heated seats, double-check that those work as well.

From the outside, **look to see if the body panels line up properly.** You should also go around and **check that all the doors and the trunk open and close with ease,** as this is something easy to overlook.

If you have questions about anything you see, you can always ask a team member or service technician to provide some extra insight.



START SHOPPING FOR A USED CAR

Now that you know what to look for when buying a used car, we hope you'll feel confident taking the next steps in your car-shopping journey. With these tools on your side, it'll be simple to find a model you love. Visit your local used car dealer and start shopping today!