

THE VIRTUAL CAR SUPERSTORE **FREE** USED CAR BUYING GUIDE

www.virtualcarsuperstore.co.uk



So, you're buying a used car... The dealer tells you it's a good little runner... One careful owner...with all the mod cons...CD player, air conditioning... AND it won't let you down...sounds perfect. BUT IS IT?

Last year, nearly 72,000 consumers complained to Consumer Direct about issues with second-hand car sales.



There are over 50 businesses in the UK openly offering 'mileage correction services'. The potential loss to consumers from the purchase of vehicles with false mileage would be up to £580 million a year!

The tips you will find in our free guide may save you considerable time and money in the search for your perfect used car.



Tips for Buying a Used Car

Buying a used car can be risky. After all, how do you know if it's a 'cut-and-shut' just by looking at it? You can't, but with our help, you could land yourself a real gem instead of a lemon. Here are some tips depending on where you choose to buy.

Clocking



Where the odometer has been wound back on a high-mileage car in order to raise the asking price. Every 1,000 miles removed increases the value substantially.

Most modern vehicles have digital odometers which can be tampered with, using a laptop and some specialised software leaving no visible evidence of interference.

Older cars may display the more conventional clues of clocking. Examine the dashboard for worn screws; the instruments may have been tampered with.

Chips made by stones across the front of the bonnet, grille and bumper can be an indication of lots of motorway journeys.

Worn pedal rubbers or a shiny, worn steering wheel should raise suspicions if the odometer shows a low mileage.

Similarly, an older vehicle that has virtually new pedals/gearstick and/or upholstery may also indicate that something is being hidden.

Most cars average around 10,000 miles per year. Check that the mileage on the clock roughly ties in with the age and appearance of the car.

The vehicle documents may also help corroborate the mileage. Check the mileages on the service records and MOT certificates. Contact the garages that performed the work and ask them to confirm the mileage they recorded at the time of the service/MOT.

You can also contact the previous keeper on the V5C/logbook and ask them what the mileage was on the vehicle when they bought and sold it.

If, after all these checks, you still have any doubts, walk away.

Car cloning – vehicle identity theft



One car is given the identity of another by replacing the number plates with those from an almost identical vehicle - same make, model and colour. This is done either to mask the true identity of a stolen vehicle

Number plates may be physically stolen or purchased from unscrupulous suppliers.

If you're buying a car be particularly wary of anything without a V5C registration document (though these can be forged and should not be considered absolute proof of who 'owns' the vehicle) and service history (garage bills etc.) consistent with the vehicle's age. Check all documentation carefully to make sure they tell a consistent story and that they match the vehicle. If you are unfortunate enough to 'buy' a cloned vehicle then you will lose both the car and any money paid for it.

'Cut-and-shut'



This is when the remains of two or more cars, which have usually been accident-damaged and written off by insurers, are welded together, then illegally given the identity of one of the wrecks.

The cosmetic work is often outstanding, and it's usually very difficult to spot a 'cut-and-shut' from the outside.

Buying a used car privately

1. Don't buy a car on 'private sale' terms if you suspect the seller might be a dealer.
2. If you call in response to an advert, say you're calling 'about the car you advertised'. If the seller has to ask which car, they may be a dealer.
3. Be wary of adverts quoting mobile numbers or numbers that appear in several ads.
4. Don't let the owner bring the car to you or meet you in a layby, petrol station or similar – view it at their home, in daylight.
5. Take someone with you for company and security
6. Does the seller really appear to be the owner?
 - o Is it their home?
 - o They should be familiar with the car and its controls.

Dealers selling used cars



On the whole, a dealer with a new-car franchise is probably best, although there are many highly respected used-car dealers around.

1. Choose an established dealership with a good reputation they'll want to maintain.
2. Check that the extras a dealer includes, such as warranties, are competitively priced.
3. The best way of finding a dealer is through personal recommendation. You can also check out owner's clubs and forums for recommendations – these can also be a good source of hints and tips for buying and keeping that type of vehicle.
4. If you need to borrow part of the amount, don't automatically take the dealer's finance. It's always worth getting alternative quotes.
5. It's vital to check the warranty:
 - o a mechanical breakdown warranty will probably cost extra and won't cover everything
 - o find out exactly what is and isn't covered, for how long and for how much.

Auctions for used cars



It's best not to buy a used car at auction unless you know your way around an engine and you're aware of current price trends.

1. Take someone with you – preferably someone familiar with auctions and who knows about cars.
2. Go first as a spectator to get the feel of how auctions work.
3. Read the terms and conditions of sale carefully.
4. Don't get carried away bidding:
 - stick to your budget
 - factor in any seller's premium or other fees charged on top of the 'hammer price'.
5. Test the car as soon as you can after you've paid – if there's anything wrong you'll only have a very short time in which to complain.

Online for used cars



You could save yourself a lot of time, trouble and money by buying on-line. You can see what cars are available without even leaving your house.

However, remember, if a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

1. Make notes of what's on offer:
 - you can use them to compare cars
 - they'll give you a written record of what's been agreed.
2. Make sure that you know exactly who you're buying from:
 - check the firm is credible and trustworthy
 - if possible, see whether others have had positive dealings with the company.
3. Read the small print before you click that 'Buy' button:
 - if an online seller can't or won't offer 100% customer satisfaction, shop elsewhere.
4. If you decide to buy, print off all details:
 - this includes the seller's details, terms and conditions, quotes and the completed order form.
5. **Always get confirmation of your order by post, fax or email.** As a minimum, your confirmation should give you an order number, the main specifications you've ordered, the price agreed and when the car should be delivered.

General advice for buying a used car

Wherever you choose to buy, here are some general tips on buying a used car.

Budget well:

include the cost of insurance, tax, and any work that may be needed.

Do your homework:

check our price guide and compare similar cars in the classifieds so you know as much as you can about the value of different cars to avoid being overcharged.

Research the seller if possible. If you're buying from a dealer, make sure they are registered traders, and are members of an industry body like SMMT or RMI.

Never view a car in the rain, in poor light or at night.

You won't be able to evaluate the condition of the car effectively – water obscures scratches, dents and other problems. Make sure you can see the vehicle clearly and from all angles.

Ask about the car's service history:

check any documentation provided, including current and previous MOT certificates.

Insist on seeing the V5 vehicle registration document:

the registration document shows the registered keeper and NOT the legal owner

check the name of the present keeper

is the seller the registered keeper?

if not, why are they selling it for someone else?

Use the other keeper details on the V5C to do further research – contact them to find out more about when they owned the car, what work was done and how many miles they did in it

Check the seller has a current MOT certificate and certificate of insurance:

if the car is three years old or more, make sure there's a continuous series of annual MOT certificates

see if the mileage on these certificates agrees with the service records

double check that the mileage increases at a consistent rate each year.

Handle with care:

be wary of anything that seems like a real bargain, or has a very low mileage for its age

Check the service record:

ensure that the cam belt has been replaced according to the manufacturer's recommended intervals. Contact the dealer who stamped the service records at the appropriate time interval and ask if they completed the required work on the vehicle.
if the record's not clear it will have to be replaced – if a belt fails, you might have to buy a whole new engine.

Check the handbook:

Confirm how the security system works.
Find out what keys were provided when the car was new. Modern car keys are expensive to replace, particularly the coloured 'master' key provided by some manufacturers to programme new spare keys to the car. There should be at least one spare key – ask why if there isn't.

Test-drive the car before committing yourself:

it's the only way to assess whether the car meets all your needs you'll find out about its mechanical condition too.
If possible, do a cold start and a hot start, and see if there are any differences in performance.

Be vigilant:

Look for mismatched panels and colours on doors, bonnet and tailgate. These can indicate that the car has been repaired after a shunt.

Look for traces of spray paint on door handles, window seals and mouldings.

Check the engine bay – if it's been power-washed clean, that may remove evidence of any fluid leaks. Make sure your test drive is lengthy, and check under the bonnet again for any evidence of leaks.

Don't be put off by dirty seats and grubby carpets:

After all, these can be cleaned.

However stains on internal fabric head-linings (roof coverings) are impossible to remove completely.

Check for damage underneath any fitted seat covers. Seats can be expensive to replace.

Go on, haggle:

many sellers will have allowed for bargaining when they set the price

remember your budget?

Don't be pressured into buying.

There are always other vehicles out there

If it's too good to be true, then be on your guard – bargains are few and far between. If a seller is selling cheap, ask yourself (and them) why. And be wary of 'sob stories' – change of job, break-up of relationship, moving abroad, new baby on the way.



Don't hand over money until you've agreed collection or delivery:
check exactly what's included in the price
include any work that the seller has agreed to do.
Make sure you get a receipt that details the vehicle, price, terms
of sale and sellers details.
Walk away if you're not completely happy.

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WE FIND THE RIGHT CAR FOR YOU



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