

Buying a Used Car

There are many places to get used cars:

- **New car dealers** have many types of used vehicles for sale. There are former rental cars, commonly called “program cars.” These one- to two-year-old cars have rather high mileage but may still be warranted by the factory. Then there are vehicles traded in by new car buyers and those turned in at the end of a lease. Previously leased vehicles can be a good buy, since most are still under factory warranty, are well maintained and have low mileage, as required by the lease. All other used cars from new car dealers come with 30-day warranties.

- Another source of used vehicles is **rental companies** like Thrifty or Enterprise. Their vehicles also have rather high miles. They usually come with 30-day warranties from the company.

- **Used car dealers** have a wide variety of vehicles and a good selection of older used cars. Avoid fly-by-night operations, however.

- Cars from **used car companies with “no haggle” pricing** like CarMax and AutoNation tend to be higher priced than ones found elsewhere.

- And last but not least, there are **private owners**. Private owners usually advertise in newspaper classified ads. If you have enough information and follow the steps outlined below, a privately sold vehicle can sometimes be a great bargain. Keep in mind, however, that unless a vehicle’s still under factory warranty, it won’t come with any 30-day warranty.

Before buying any used car, have a mechanic inspect it. You’ll need a safety inspection before you can register the vehicle anyway, so spending \$60 or even \$100 up front to make sure the vehicle’s reliable makes sense. Ask to see any service records that may be available. They can help you tell how well the previous owner cared for the vehicle. They may also tip you off to lingering problems.

Needless to say, you should never buy any vehicle without really test driving it; that’s especially true when it comes to used ones. Drive it on the highway. Drive it in stop-and-go traffic. Drive it up hill and down. And sit in it long enough to determine its comfort level. If you can’t test drive it more than 5 miles, don’t buy it!