

Connecticut Better Business Bureau offers tips on buying a used car

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Getting a good deal depends on many factors

Wallingford, CT - June 9, 2009 – As economics drive some consumers to buy used vehicles, buyers should invest time to consider the same issues that apply to buying a new car.

While some consumers are “going green” by seeking out more environmentally-friendly vehicles, many others are opting for used cars to replace their older vehicles or gas-guzzlers.

According to Connecticut Better Business Bureau President, Paulette Scarpetti, there are many issues to weigh before purchasing a used car.

“Buying a used vehicle requires homework and planning to ensure that an attractively-priced used car or truck doesn’t have hidden problems that can turn it into a very costly investment in the long run.”

Some of the factors associated with purchasing a used vehicle include how it will be used, how long the consumer intends to keep it, features, financing options and forecast costs for maintenance, repairs and operation.

Friends can offer valuable information on their experience and the reliability of a particular model, and whether they’d buy the same car again. Consumer review publications can also offer useful information for used car buyers, and the National Highway Safety Administration (NHTSA) operates a toll-free hotline 800-424-9393, as well as an Internet site (nhtsa.dot.gov) to verify whether there have been any recalls or other safety problems with a given vehicle make or model.

There are also several free, helpful resources to determine which seller is offering the best deal.

A library, bookstore, bank or insurance agent should have a copy of the monthly National Automotive Dealers Association (NADA) Official Used Car Guide (nadaguides.org), Kelly Blue Book (kbb.com) or Edmund's (edmunds.com) to estimate a car's resale value based on the vehicle's age, mileage and condition.

Used cars may be purchased from new and used car dealers, some of which may service the vehicle and provide limited warranties. Used car superstores offer a no-price haggling method of buying used cars and car rental agencies may sell used rental cars nine to 12 months old and driven fewer than 12,000 miles. Always check a dealer's free Reliability Report at bbb.org.

Buyers also may find get a better deal from private owners through newspaper ads, however it is important to check on the car's history in maintenance and repair records, and if the seller is the first-time owner, records of the original purchase. Also check the title to ensure the person selling the car is the legal owner. For a fee, some independent companies provide detailed information on a car's history.

Checking a car's history is important, since some criminal dealers may sell stolen vehicles through newspaper ads, disguising themselves as private owners. These cars may also be damaged, have hidden mechanical or electrical problems and their odometers may be rolled back to falsify the vehicle's actual mileage.

Under the Federal Trade Commission's Used Car Rule, all but private sellers are required to place a sticker called a "Buyer's Guide" in the window of their used cars, light-duty vans and trucks. The Guide tells consumers whether the vehicle comes with a warranty and, if so, which systems are covered, how long the warranty applies and what percent of repair costs are covered by the dealer.

More information on buying a used vehicle and a list of dealers is available at bbb.org.

Founded in 1928, Connecticut BBB is an unbiased non-profit organization that sets and upholds high standards for fair and honest business behavior. BBB offers objective advice and a wide range of education on topics affecting marketplace trust. BBB also offers complaint and dispute resolution support for consumers and businesses. Today, 128 BBBs serve communities across the U.S. and Canada, evaluating and monitoring more than three million local and national businesses and charities. For more advice on finding companies and businesses, start your search with trust at www.bbb.org.

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