

## How to buy a used car?

### BRIEF

What are the 12 questions to ask a private owner or other used vehicle source about a vehicle?

1.	How many km has the vehicle been driven (the average is about 15.000 to 20.000 km per year) (In Europe, the average is about 25,000 km per year & in the USA it's about 40,000 to 45,000 km per year)
2.	<p>Is the transmission?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Automatic?</li> <li>➤ Semi-automatic?</li> <li>➤ Manual?</li> </ul> <p>N.B.: if the transmission is not what you want, there is no need to ask further questions.</p>
3.	What is the condition of the vehicle's body? Is there any <u>rust</u> ?
4.	<p>Has the vehicle been repainted and if so, why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Avoid</b> → repainted vehicles</li> </ul>
5.	<p>Has the vehicle been involved in any accidents?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Avoid</b> → vehicles that have been involved in any accidents</li> </ul>
6.	<p>When are the next state inspection and emissions started test due?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The vehicle should have a minimum of <u>at least</u> 6 months remaining until the next required state inspection and emissions test</li> </ul>
7.	<p>How often were the engine oil and the oil filter changed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An acceptable answer should be every 4.000 to 5.000 km or about every 3 to 4 months</li> </ul>
8.	<p>Are you the original owner of the vehicle?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original owners tend to take better care of vehicles</li> </ul>
9.	<p>What is the reason that the vehicle is being sold?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is encouraging of the individual is the original owner and if he or she is planning to buy again the same make of vehicle</li> </ul>
10.	<p>Are parts and service readily available for the vehicle? Where can parts and services be obtained?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Avoid</b> → buying a vehicle if parts and services are not readily available</li> </ul>
11.	<p>Has the vehicle had any recent repairs (new brakes, tires, battery) or service and if so, what garage performed the repairs or service?</p>
12.	What price are you asking for the vehicle?

## How to buy a used car?

### Introduction:

Most consumers want to know how to buy the car of their choice at the best possible price.

With improvements in the quality of automobiles over the years, a well-maintained car should remain reliable for the least 7 years 100.000 km.

If you are looking for a new model, buying a used car of the same style, only a couple of years old can really be a good deal. The biggest percentage (approximately 20%) old a new car's value is lost in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of ownership. Accessories such as expensive stereo systems, power assists and convenience options are far less a factor in resale pricing.

- A. Pricing a Used car
- B. Price Guides
- C. Financing / Insurance
- D. Where to buy?
- E. Outside of car
- F. Inside of car
- G. Drive test

### A. Pricing a Used car:

With the average price of a new car increasing every year, it is not surprising that the fastest growing segment of the auto industry is the used car market. Buying a car that is just a year or 2 old can save thousands of dollars over the price of a new model, especially as the price of new cars keeps increasing.

Decide on the:

Decide on the:

- Year →
- Make → You desire on the vehicle
- Model →
- Option →

- Do you need
  - A family vehicle?
  - An economical model (for a college student for example)?

Once you have decided on a specific model, it is a good idea to have a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> choice in mind.

- ❖ visibility,
- ❖ safety features,
- ❖ comfort,
- ❖ ride and
- ❖ other items of importance

Pay attention to:



## **B. Price Guides:**

Unfortunately these price guides cannot be found in Lebanon or do not exist in our country (these books do not provide a definitive price but serve as a reference point for negotiating with the seller).

What can you do?

You can check instead the classified ads in the local newspapers to determine what advertisers are asking for the type of car you want.

## **C. Financing / Insurance:**

Check with local banks for financing:

1. Be sure to determine the amount that the bank will finance for a specific model.
2. Consider obtaining pre-approved credit, which would eliminate dealer pressure on the purchase of a vehicle.

Check with your insurance company for a quote on the vehicle you want to purchase. Can you afford to pay insurance and car payments?

**Also be sure to allow a little "extra" in your budget for unexpected repairs**

## **D. Where to buy?**

There are many sources available to today's purchaser:

- ✓ New car dealers,
- ✓ Used car dealers,
- ✓ Rental car companies,
- ✓ Leasing companies, and
- ✓ Private individuals

New car dealers generally keep only the best cars and usually give them a thorough inspection. In addition, consider buying from a dealer who handles the particular brand of vehicle that you are interested in.

Rental returns are often an excellent value: these vehicles less than 2 years old, well equipped and maintained, with good warranties.

Private individuals are another source to be considered when purchasing a used vehicle: one benefit is that the potential buyer can meet the seller face to face and inquire:

- About any mechanical problems,
- Who was the principal driver
- Why the vehicle is being sold, and
- Request maintenance records

## E-Outside of car:

- Look at the vehicle during the daytime as darkness may hide problems.
- Do not look at vehicles in the rain which hide scratches.
- Be sure to concentrate on big defects and not minor repairs that can be made easily and inexpensively.

What should you examine or check?

1. Examine both sides, front and back, of the car from a distance:

- Look for:
- ❖ Ripples, waves, poorly fitted panels and all of which may indicate that bodywork may have been done.
  - ❖ For dents or rust around the bottom of the doors, fenders and under the vehicle as well

### **Attention!**

- Bubbles along moulding or chrome indicates rust underneath
- If the rust has gone through the metal, you could be looking at major repairs.

2. Check for welding spots on the frame, which may indicate a serious accident or repairs.

### **Attention!**

- Open and close the doors, hood, trunk or hatchback: be sure they fit and are easy to close without shamming, sagging or sticking
- Stand back approximately 10 to 15 feet from the car and see if the car is level. If one corner seems lower than the others, it suggests a broken spring or other chassis or suspension problem.

3. Check the shocks by pushing down on each corner of the car and letting go.

### **Attention!**

Your car should bounce upward only once and then settle back to its original position.

If the car bounces several times, new shock absorbers may be needed.

4. Check the tires: they should be in good shape without sidewall cracks.

### **Attention!**

Check the inside of the tires for brake fluid leakage

5. Look under the car for:

- oil spots
- leaks from the transmission
- power steering
- shock absorbers

6. Open the hood and:

- Check belts and hoses for cracks or wear
- Remove the radiator cap: the coolant should be clean
- Attention! Brown sludge inside the radiator neck may indicate poor maintenance
  
- Pull out the oil dipstick:
  - If the oil is gummy or greyish, **the engine might have serious problems.**
  - If there is a black build up near the top of the dipstick, smells it: **a burnt smell indicates that the engine or transmission has been run hot.**
  - The automatic transmission fluid should be clear and reddish in colour, not brown or black: a burnt smell or low fluid level indicates neglect.
- Be sure and check the fluid level in the master cylinder as well: if the fluid level is low, check for leaks and have brake pads checked.

7. Look inside the trunk: make sure there is an inflated spare tire, a jack and a lug wrench



## F. Inside of car:

The interior can give you a good idea of the overall condition and how well the entire car has been maintained.

1. Check the mileage to be sure the car has not been used too much for the price being asked. Today's cars average approximately 18,000 km per year (Around 25,000 km in Europe & 40,000 km in the United States)  
Compare the service stickers on the door jamb or under the hood to see if the recorded mileage is consistent with the odometer reading.

2. Check the condition of the:

- ❖ seats
- ❖ belts
- ❖ carpeting

3. Check the windows to see if they open and close easily:

- manual windows should crank smoothly
- power windows should not hesitate
  - All glass should be free from serious cracks or scratches

4. Look at the:

- Brake
- Accelerator
- Clutch

These pedals should work smoothly without strange noises or binding

5. Check all exterior lights and flashers on the car to ensure they are operating properly.  
How?

Start the engine and check the warning lights and gauges as well as all the accessories to make sure they work

6. Make certain that the air conditioning blows very cold air

We advise you!

- ✓ Do not be afraid to take up the salespersons' time.
- ✓ Be sure to stay in control and do not let anyone take you into buying a vehicle you do not want.
- ✓ Do not be afraid to walk away, especially if the "deal won't be there tomorrow".
- ✓ Shop during daylight hours in order to thoroughly inspect vehicle and take a test drive.
- ✓ Be sure to drive the car under a variety of conditions, such as:
  - Hills
  - Highways
  - Stop-and-go traffic

This could be a fairly extensive drive, not just a drive around the block.

### Attention!

A car's good points or problems are often apparent after a few km: if the engine was warm when you arrived to look at the car, it may mean the seller has been running it to hide starting difficulties.

### G. Drive test:

1. Drive the car on hills, highways and in stop-and-go traffic.
2. Start the engine and press down the brake.
3. Listen for noises, which could indicate engine problems.
4. Put the car in neutral and rev the engine: check for smoke from rear exhaust
5. Punch the gas pedal: does engine respond without hesitations then turn to normal?
6. Check the lights on the control panels: be sure they all work.
7. Does automatic transmission shift smoothly?
8. Manual transmission should shift smoothly between gears without grinding.
9. Clutch should engage and disengage smoothly without grabbing.
10. Drive in reverse.
11. Does car pull or vibrate when driving on a flat, smooth road?
12. Do the brakes grab evenly and does the car slow down in a straight line?
13. Drive at 50 km per hour and listen for any unusual noises.
14. Accelerate to 70 km per hour, does the front end shake or vibrate?
15. Drive quickly over a rough road and listen for any loud squeaks or rattles.
16. Does the car bounce or bang over small bumps?
17. Check the temperature gauge to see if it shows a high reading.
18. Accelerate hard on an empty road, does the car respond immediately?
19. Try it again.
20. Accelerate on a hill, does the car respond immediately?
21. Cut off the engine. The restart the engine: does it restart easily?
22. Check for leaks under the hood and beneath the car.
23. Check the tailpipe. Are there any black, sooty oil deposits?
24. Does the odometer mileage seem to match the physical condition of the car?
25. Check odometer for scratches, misaligned digits, digits that stick.