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The worst fear when buying that great deal of a used car is to have it break down the moment the sale becomes final. It happens, occasionally, where a buyer gets ripped off when buying a used car. Unfortunately, there are people out there that are just trying to offload their junk on someone else. It may seem like a good deal at the time, but later when you try to get the vehicle to pass a safety inspection you find out you have just ended up with a lemon. To ensure that you are not buying a lemon please read these tips.

Private Sales

Why are you Selling?

The first thing you want to do is ask the seller why they are selling their used car. Why don't they like it anymore? Is it not good enough for them? And for that matter what's so great about their new car? Put them on the defense, this way they will have to come up with a quick answer, if they hesitate they may have something to hide. It is best to ask this in person, so you can judge not only their tone, but also their body language. Most people are terrible liars. Also be wary if the seller tries to close the deal too quickly – it could be a good sign they are trying to offload a piece of junk on you.

Known Problems

Ask the seller to point out all known defects and problems. When doing your own inspection if you find obvious problems that the seller did not mention there might be more wrong with the vehicle than they are letting on.

Stains, Leaks & Puddles

Look for stains and leaks in the driveway and garage. Rust colored stains indicate a leaking radiator. Black or Brown puddles and stains indicate an oil or transmission fluid leak. Purple puddles indicate transmission fluid leaks.

Proof-of-Service

Ask for all the maintenance records, proof of oil changes and tune-ups. If they don't have it, for all you know the oil has never been changed.

Rebuilt Junkers

Look at all the seams in the car, the gaps should be the same distance apart at the top of a panel as they are at the bottom. Uneven gaps or small dents can suggest accident damage. The paint should match on all panels, and beware of body-kits and custom paint jobs. They may look cool, but they could be hiding damage to the chassis below. Look for over spray on plastic parts, around lights, mirrors and edges of the engine bay.

Remember taking the used car to get a proper inspection by a mechanic prior to purchasing it is the most effective way of ensuring you won't get stuck with a lemon.

Dealers

Dealers may also be purchasing used vehicles from the U.S., and may even unknowingly be selling a car that has had flood damage. Before you even leave the lot, here are some steps to see if the vehicle has had any flood damage.

Flood Damage

Look for rust on door hinges, spare tire, crowbar, jack, metal holdings under the seats, and any other metal inside the car. If you find any rusting in these places, it may have had extensive water damage and it is best to move on.

If you decide to go through a dealership, which is your best bet when purchasing a use vehicle, remember it is always best to ensure you are buying your used car from a reputable dealer.

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