



Article published on August 14th 2012 | [Article Writing](#)

### Being Cautious when Buying a Used Car

Buying a used car can be a problem even for someone who has experience in driving and in maintaining a car. Smooth talking salesmen and wily private sellers can often hide problems with the car. This leaves you with a lot of problems after you've taken the car home. You may be too excited when you get to buy a used car for under 5000 or even a used car under 3000 that you won't pay attention to simple details.

In order to ensure you get a reliable used car in the process, you really do need to exercise both patience and care. Take your time in looking at a car.

Remember this is a purchase that you trust your money and your life with. You want a car that will last you a long time and give you plenty of good miles.

While you may take the car for the usual tests such as driving it

### The 5 Things Often Forgotten

#### 1. Bodywork

Look out for obvious problems such as dents or rust. But also be aware that there are quick ways to hide problems. Hastily done repairs may mean that these are improperly done and can eventually cost you more. Look for bubbling in the car's edges. These can mean improper paint or even rust bubbles that are corroding or eating away at the body.

Lift the hood, trunk and open all the doors so you can see the frame and the hinges. Anything out of alignment can be a pain to get fixed. It can also mean that the car was in a collision one time in its life. If there are any signs of uneven paint, it is usually a sign of past repair. Ask the owner how they got that damage.

#### 2. Maintenance History

Always ask for the maintenance history. In its first few years, the car is usually maintained at the dealership as part of the warranty. Be a bit suspicious if it doesn't have paperwork there. It should have at receipts of both the oil purchase as well as the service done for changing the oil, spark plugs and replacing the fluids. A good way would be to compare the maintenance history with the prescribed periodic maintenance in the car's manual. You'll be able to see if anything was missed if it has any major maintenance work that's coming up.

Once you've checked it out, take it for a test drive. Take it for a drive over different speeds and different surfaces. Check the braking power on sudden braking (not at very high speeds though!) It should be firm, smooth and not have any rattling noises or things that seem loose.

#### 3. Leaks

Don't drive off just yet. Have a look under the car. Check the shock absorbers and the joints near the tires for sign of fluid leaks or grease build up. See also if anything is pooling under the car. Oil, fuel and other fluids which have stained the floor will be a sign of leaks.

#### 4. Tires

This is something that isn't checked as much as it should. Tires will usually need replacement when the tread pattern begins to fade. Uneven tread patterns (the outside is much thinner than the inside of the tire) will mean alignment issues. Check to see if the treads are still pretty thick. Any bulges forming on the sidewall are also something to be concerned about.

You can check tire tread depth with a coin. Place a penny in between the tread grooves. When Lincoln's head isn't covered by the treads, it's less than 2/32" thick and needs replacement.

#### 5. Legality

While the papers all seem to be there, take a day or so to have it run by your local DMV or police station. The first thing you should check is if it isn't stolen and it actually belongs to the seller. The next would be to check if there are any outstanding tickets that need to be paid. Buying the car will mean you have to buy it clean and without any encumbrances or problems with the police or the government.

Always keep these things in mind. Remember to check the car thoroughly. Chances are if you've bought a lemon, you'll be stuck with it for a very long time. So do the regular tests and don't overlook the items above as well. Follow these tips and you'll have a better time buying a reliable used car.

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Used cars under 5000, Used car financing

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