

USED CAR SALES

In the market for a used car? You need to be aware of the many potential pitfalls waiting out there. The used car sales market is an easy place to get burned. Here are a few tips that will ensure you get a fair deal on reliable transportation.

Unless you have a recommendation from a trusted source, your most wily adversary is the used car sales person. You are his target the minute you walk on the lot. Assume every vehicle is overpriced and the actual selling price is negotiable.

When you go car shopping, bring a friend along. You can play the eager buyer while your friend is the skeptic, ready with cold water to scotch the deal. This strategy can elicit some truths about both the car and the used car sales lot as the seller.

Most used car sales lots have a number of lemons as well as some reliable cars. When the used car sales person approaches you, all smiles as he straightens his tie, his primary task may be to steer you to a loser. Don't get me wrong, there are some trustworthy sales people in the car market. There are also many unscrupulous ones. Your best strategy is to let him know you're just looking around and will let him know when you need his assistance. Try to give the impression that you don't need to find a car today, even if you're desperate for transportation.

Don't linger too long by any one vehicle. Give the cars on the lot a casual once-over and then move on.

Do ask what the owner's policy is on guarantees. If every used car on the lot is sold on an as-is basis, this gives you negotiating power. If you do find a vehicle that suits your purpose, find out if he has any objection to your mechanic taking a look at the car before you buy. If your used car sales guy says, "No problem!" the deal is worth pursuing.

When you've zeroed in on a car you might like to buy, adopt a skeptical look as you thoroughly inspect the vehicle. The sales person will likely be talking a blue streak, extolling the many virtues of this particular car. Frown if you see a dent, a bad tire or a tear in the upholstery. Here's where you ask about the Blue Book(r) value. If he claims not to have the book for that year, call your bank. They'll know.

Following a visual inspection and a true ballpark value, you'll want to take a test drive. If all goes well, make your offer, contingent on your mechanic's

inspection. Expect some wrangling and sob stories from the used car sales guy. If you're prepared to pay cash, know that this is a powerful negotiating point. Follow through on your mechanic's inspection before you part with your money. In the end, you may just get yourself a good deal, a rarity in used car sales!