

# Automotive Trends

## Make Used-Car Shopping Simple, Easy...And Fun!

(NAPSA)—If you're one of the millions of Americans who are considering purchasing a used car—perhaps a second vehicle for your teen—no problem. That is, unless you unwittingly buy a lemon. Then you've got problems.

Annual U.S. used-car sales exceed 42 million. Only 1.4 million certified used vehicles were sold at dealerships last year. Millions of other uncertified purchases took place at used-car lots and private sales.

While people continue to buy used cars in large numbers, they also find it very stressful. Half of today's used-car buyers are women, and a whopping 78 percent find car buying to be their least satisfying retail experience. Fast-talking salesmen intimidate some, but others simply don't obtain sufficient information to buy wisely.

So what can one do when considering purchasing a vehicle that may look perfectly fine but in reality may be hiding a Pandora's box of problems under the hood?

If possible, take a mechanic with you. Mechanics can detect engine problems, electrical failures, bad brakes, flood damage and more.

But what if your mechanic is not available?

Many shoppers are turning to CarMD. An easy-to-use, handheld diagnostic device, it incorporates the same basic technology as a mechanic's tools but costs much less. It's like having a mechanic's opinion in your pocket.

You simply plug the tester into the vehicle's OBD2 port (generally found under the dashboard), turn the ignition on and wait a few seconds for the beep. Color-coded LEDs will instantly tell you if the vehicle has any hidden problems.

A green light on the tool indicates that all emissions-related systems are running normally, a yellow light indicates a potential problem, and a red light indicates trouble. It could be something as simple as a loose gas cap or a



**When used-car shopping, arm yourself with as much information as you can beforehand and you'll be sipping lemonade...rather than driving a lemon.**

much more serious—and costly—problem.

If the “Check Engine” light comes on, ask the seller how long it's been on and when service was last performed on the vehicle. You can also call 888.MyCarMD from the lot for a free diagnosis on the vehicle you like. Before making an offer, buyers should check other parts of the vehicle not covered by the tester.

### Other Handy Tips:

Do your homework before shopping. Check online for evaluations, recalls, technical service bulletins and retention values for the makes and models you prefer. Determine the vehicle's worth before negotiating the price; order a VIN history report/“lemon check” and proof of mileage.

When shopping, bring a friend along for a second opinion. Also, bring your driver's license and proof of insurance. Other helpful items include a tire gauge, a magnet (to check for body filler under paint), a flashlight to look under the car and a CD to check the sound system.

Lastly, ask probing questions:

- Who originally owned the vehicle?
- Why are you selling?
- Were there major repairs?
- Has the vehicle passed an emissions “smog” test?

For more used-car-buying tips, visit the Used Car Buy/Sell section on the Web site [www.CarMD.com](http://www.CarMD.com) or call (888) 692-2763.