

# Ask Auto Andy

## Used Cars: What You Should Know

(NAPSA)—Dear Auto Andy:

We'd like to buy our son a car for his 18th birthday. We want to find a safe, reliable used car that will take him all the way through his college years. We've never bought used before and are afraid of getting a lemon. Can you give us some guidance regarding what to look for and what to avoid?

L.D. and P.D. in Virginia

Dear L.D and P.D.:

Your son is lucky that you have the presence of mind to find out exactly how to get a quality used car. With a little diligence, you can get a great used car deal with ease.

Here are some suggestions:

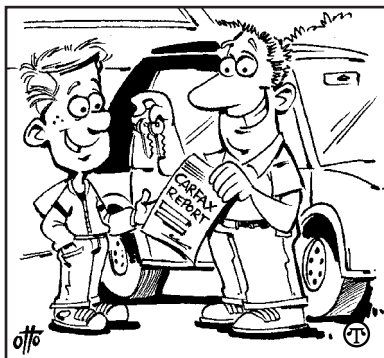
1. Get a copy of *Finding the Best Used Car* available from the Federal Consumer Information Center in Pueblo, Colorado (visit [www.pueblo.gsa.gov](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov) for details).

2. Determine what vehicle best meets the needs of your college-bound teen. How will he be using it? How far will he be driving it? How much "stuff" will he be hauling to and from college? Are issues like gas mileage, air conditioning, and insurance a concern?

3. Set a budget for what you want to spend *before* you shop.

4. Research a few makes and models that meet your criteria and price limitations. Sources such as Edmunds.com, *Consumer Reports*, and KBB.com can help you determine value and reliability of those cars.

Edmunds.com even has a community driven "Town Hall" that provides consumer, expert and manufacturer interaction on all aspects of researching, selecting,



**Get a vehicle history report to help determine if your used car is safe and reliable.**

purchasing, leasing, maintaining, owning and selling a vehicle.

5. Once you've narrowed down your choice, start visiting local dealers. For any vehicle you consider: ask detailed questions about the vehicle's performance, history and reliability, request maintenance and inspection records, and get a CARFAX vehicle history report (most dealers will provide reports for free, you just have to ask or get one yourself at [www.carfax.com](http://www.carfax.com)).

6. Test drive the vehicle. Have your son test drive it, if you can. Make sure everything on the car works properly—brakes, gauges, lights, windows, locks, etc.

Take the car up to a good speed to make sure it does not shimmy, shake or pull to one side. Check for excessive wear and tear in the interior.

7. Have it inspected by a mechanic you trust.

By doing your homework, you will be able to negotiate a good price for a safe and reliable car. Happy driving—Andy