

CAR CORNER

Want the Best Possible Deal? Buy a Used Vehicle Now



(NAPSA)—With all of the low-interest financing and cash-back offers for shoppers in new-car showrooms, you may think that's where all of the values are in the automotive marketplace. However, now is also a good time to buy used as trade-in vehicles continue to pile up on dealer lots and the resale value of these vehicles has softened.

The used-car oversupply came about for several reasons. Along with record-breaking new-car sales for the last quarter of 2001, there were 200,000 more trade-ins than were anticipated in just the month of October alone, according to Paul Taylor, chief economist of the National Automobile Dealers Association. Prior to the flood of consumer trade-in vehicles, more used vehicles than average were entering the wholesale market. As air travel declined due to the aftermath of Sept. 11, rental-car firms began to cut back on their fleet inventory and have been sending more used vehicles to wholesale auctions. In addition, pre-owned inventories have grown over the past year as a slew of vehicles came off of two- and three-year leases.

There are good reasons other than low prices for buying used cars, particularly vehicles that are covered by a manufacturer-certified program. You let someone else take the big initial depreciation hit while having the peace of mind offered by extended warranty protection.

Once you make the decision to go down the used-car path, there are many different factors to con-

sider. Which vehicle best suits my needs? Should I buy from a dealer or a private seller? One good starting point is the Internet. Web sites such as cars.com are great places to visit to answer these questions, find dealers and individual sellers who have that perfect used car, compare models and options, and obtain competitive pricing information.

Bill Swislow, executive producer at cars.com, lists 10 things to consider when buying a used car.

1. Research asking price with Black Book.

2. Determine how much it would cost to finance and insure the vehicle.

3. Make sure the car isn't a lemon by researching the vehicle's history using online and printed resources.

4. Interview prospective sellers on the phone before meeting them in person. It's best to set a day-time appointment.

5. Before test drive, check undercarriage, engine and body for rust or damage; check interior for cleanliness, comfort and size; inspect tires for wear.

6. Check oil for proper level and color; check coolant and radiator for leaks or corrosion.

7. Drive on highway to gauge acceleration and handling; test brakes and steering and alignment.

8. Practice parking for maneuverability and sight lines.

9. After test drive, inspect engine for leaks, odors or smoke; review service records, receipts and title.

10. Have specialist or mechanic inspect your vehicle selection.