

SHOPPING FOR A USED CAR?

We have all had to do it at one time — some of us more often than others. Buying a used vehicle is something that's common to all of us, and it is a frustrating process we have endured. These guidelines might help you the next time.

Skip kicking the tires - it only hurts your toes! Don't shop for a car using your emotion. If you have your heart set on that "love at first sight" car, you will probably overlook problems. Your mind will only imagine how good you will look driving it.

The visual examination

- Stand back and look at the fit and finish. See if the doors and fenders align properly.
- Open and close the doors, trunk and hood. Do they "feel" right?
- Is there an owner's manual in the glove box?

Test the accessories

- Test all the "whistles and bells."
- Test the fan and A/C, the radio, wipers and washers, and any power-controlled devices too, such as power antenna, windows and locks.
- Look under the hood: If it's so clean in there you can do surgery, leaks may be missed.
- Look at the fluid levels and quality.
- Take it to a qualified technician and have it inspected. A reputable shop will know what's right and wrong. Ask the technician for a recommendation — it's what he or she does for a living.

Road testing

- Does it idle smoothly?
- Are there any unusual noises?
- Does it drive straight down the road? On a straight, level stretch of road, see if it wanders.
- Does the transmission shift smoothly?
- Check the brakes: Driving at 30 to 40 mph and with no one behind you, apply the brakes. If they pull in either direction, there's a problem. Check for pulsations (pedal oscillating or steering wheel vibrating when braking). This should be done at freeway speeds and lower speeds. With brakes being a safety item, any problems here need to be looked into.
- Check the records: Ask to see the service records. Maintenance and repair, if ignored, can lead to serious repair bills. Many vehicles use a timing belt, and if not replaced at proper intervals, can break and destroy an engine. Replacing an engine can cost anywhere from \$3,000 to \$7,000 (or more) - OUCH!
- Finally, bring it to us for a Used Car Inspection. We can help you avoid a make a big mistake or give it our seal of approval.