

Don't get ripped off!

First and foremost understand that reputable used car dealers look for all these problems themselves before they buy so they know what they have to fix. Where you need to worry most is when buying from a private party!

One - First thing on our list is engine oil. Does it look sludgy, watery or worst yet like the photo below? If so don't walk, run from that vehicle since it has major engine problems!



Second - Next up is the transmission. Take the parking and make sure it's completely in the on position. Put your foot on the brake and start the car while in Park, shift the gear from Park to either Drive or Reverse and pay attention to how long it takes for the transmission to engage. If it takes longer than 2 seconds then it may have issues. ALSO, if it shifts with a strong jerk or a jerk then the transmission is most likely wearing out.



Three - Important dashboard lights are up next. There are 3 very important dash lights that MUST come on and then go off when starting the car. They are the Check Engine light, ABS light and the Airbag light. If those lights do not come on then the vehicle has been tampered with and your safety is at risk. You don't want to find out too late that the airbag doesn't inflate or you suddenly lose all your brakes. Without them being fixed you wouldn't want to take the gamble that things will work properly when needed.



Four - Checking for body damage. Not all manufacturers put Vin Stickers on body panels but when they do then they can help determine if a vehicle has had body and or paint work done. There are normally 11 but they can vary. They would be located in areas like Hood, front and rear fenders, each door and lift gate if vehicle has one. With a Used Car Dealer you get a CARFAX which saves you this hassle



Here under the hood...



Here under the front doors...

This label has been painted over and not very visible!



Here at the rear door...

Keep in mind if the vehicle has stickers and one door or panel has it but the other doesn't...then it's been replaced.



Here at the rear wheel well is a sticker...



Here at the rear Tail Gate...

These can sometimes be hard to find on some vehicles and could be anywhere in and around the rear area.



Five - And finally tire safety. For this you'll want to turn the steering wheel so that the complete tire's tread is showing so you can get a good look all the way across the front of the tire.



Something like this photo is what you're hoping not to find! It's the most inner edge of the tire that can be the hardest to see and so the easiest to overlook. Any Used car dealer would never sell a car with tires like this but beware of private parties.



There are many more things to look for but this gives you a great start on what to look for and covers some of the really important components to help make sure your purchase is as safe as possible.