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What Sources Should I Check Before Buying A Used Car?

Liz Gorham

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A weekly question/answer column

**What Sources Should I Check Before
Buying A Used Car?**

Liz Gorham answers:*

Buyer beware is sound advice for people in the market for a used vehicle, and with good reason. Uncertainty of the repair record and past use, or misuse, of the vehicle can make a used car shopper leery. However, with new information available on used cars, seller beware is also now good advice. Consider these sources for information when looking for a used car.

- The April issue of “Consumer Reports” is devoted to car purchases. Look for articles on best and worst used cars and reliability of used cars. For an idea of going prices, check the N.A.D.A. (National Automobile Dealers Association) Official Used Car Guide. This publication is updated monthly and is available at most public libraries and banks. Another source for estimating the value of a used car is the Kelley Blue Book. Check your local library, financial institution or visit the web site at <http://www.kbb.com/>
- Carfax, a company out of Fairfax, Va., sells detailed information on used cars and trucks. With the vehicle identification number (VIN), they will track the 1981 or newer vehicle's history using their database of 190 million vehicles. Included in the history are such things as odometer discrepancies, any liens, if wrecked or damaged by flood, salvaged, recalled by the government or a manufacturer, or returned under a state’s lemon law. The price for their services is \$12.50 when ordered on their website at <http://www.carfaxreport.com/> To order the report by phone, call 800-FINDVIN (800-346-3825). The cost is \$20. Be sure to have your credit card and the 17-character VIN ready.
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Auto Safety Hotline (800-424-9393) can help you find out if cars of the model year you’re considering have been recalled, and for what. The car’s VIN can be used to see if the car was involved in a recall. You can also check on GM, Chrysler or Ford cars at a local dealer. With other makes, check through the manufacturer. You can then ask the seller to show you documents confirming that the defect was fixed.

* Liz Gorham is Utah State University Extension Family Resource Specialist