



Luke's Top 15 Tips When Buying Used Vehicles From www.hopewelltire.com!

1. ***Never buy before you have it checked out by your trusted mechanic!*** I can't tell you how many cars I have seen that have "never been wrecked, and driven by grandma." Grandma must have forgotten to tell her son she wrapped it around a tree, drag racing, over the salt flats!
Never trust the seller's mechanic friend. I also would not rely on the dealerships own "certified used car" or their "25 Point Inspection." You wouldn't buy a house without having your home inspector check it out. Get a third party opinion. If you are buying the car out of town, go to [ASA Certified Shop Locator](#) to find a shop. This is a database of reputable shops that have high integrity.
2. ***Research. Research. Research.*** There is a website that I like that will help you find the true value of the car you are looking at. Go to Autotrader.com .
 1. Click used cars
 2. Select within 100 miles
 3. Enter your zip code
 4. Select year/make/model
 5. Select exact year
 6. Select Dealers and private sellers
 7. Click SearchThis will give you a list of all the cars exactly like the one you are buying. Sort them out by mileage, and at the bottom of the screen it will list: Highest Price, Lowest Price, and Average Price. This will give you an idea of what you should be paying.
3. ***Check out [Kelly Blue Book](#) and see what the book value of the car is.*** This should also give you an idea of what the dealership will give you if you take it there to trade. Most vehicles are in "fair" condition.
4. ***Look at the fuel mileage of the car you are buying.*** Each manufacturer must register their cars MPG at: [GOV Fuel Economy](#)
5. ***How much is it going to cost to maintain your vehicle?*** Now the cost will vary depending on your insurance carrier and how much you drive. Most of my customers drive 15,000 miles per year. Here is a form from AAA that helps you calculate the cost of ownership of different vehicles: [AAA Driving Costs](#)
6. ***How much is insurance?*** The cost of insurance on a new car is always going to be higher than a used car. State Farm has always been my first choice in auto insurance. They might not be the least expensive, but they are always on your side when it comes to covering a claim. Have a local agent that you can get on the phone, not a 1-800 number that transfers you to Pakistan. State Farm also repairs your car with quality parts, not whoever is cheapest that day. Trust me, I know about quality parts. I recommend [Paul Lavelle at State Farm](#).

7. ***Don't trade it in at the dealership!*** Sell your existing car before going to the dealership, so you have cash in hand. Dealers play all kind of games when selling cars. I had one ask me first thing, "how much can you afford per month?" He wouldn't tell me the price of the vehicle I was looking at, or what he would give me for my trade in. I walked.

If you do not want to go through the process of selling your used car, get the lowest price of the vehicle you are buying by asking for a "drive out price." The drive out price includes all of the fees they tack on the cost of the vehicle ex: tax, tag, filing fee, admin fee, dealer owner bonus fee, and all the others they tack on. After getting the "drive out price" then inform them you want to trade in your car. This way you are not playing the dealer's numbers game.
8. ***Ask the seller what he or she really needs to get out of the car.*** They always have a figure in their head or a dollar amount they need for something. With this in mind, try calling a few ads, talk to the people and after hearing the answers you need on the car itself, ask what they really need to get out of it in cash. Now, if you don't have cash, you're kind of at a disadvantage, so just ask the question without using the cash portion. A savvy seller will ask what your offer is and this will weed him out right away. Chances are slim that you will strike a great deal if he responds with that question, so be prepared. Your answer? How could I make an offer without physically seeing the car or truck? If you like it, make an appointment to see it. If he plays hardball and the price isn't a deal, move onto the next one.
9. ***Craigslist.*** Buyer Beware! This site is responsible for awesome deals, and great scams. My opinion on craigslist: buy local and ***refer to rule #1.*** Here is a page from craigslist about scams, and how to avoid them: [Craigslist Scams](#)
10. ***Get the Facts, that is the Carfax.*** When buying from the dealerships, most of them have a subscription to Carfax, and you can get that for free. If you are buying it from an individual, get the VIN from the owner (usually 16 digits found on the driver's side dash). Log onto Carfax.com, pay a small fee, and get a report of any accidents that the vehicle has been into. Also you will get a list of owners the vehicle has had. I have even called previous owners, and ask them why they sold the car if they didn't own it long.
11. ***Don't buy from an auction unless you have a window to return it. Refer to Rule #1.*** We see auctioned cars all the time with major problems. Most around here don't even let you test drive it before buying. They are also a dumping ground for used car dealers to get rid of bad inventory.
12. ***Don't buy "Program Cars or Demo Cars."*** I recently drove a new BMW around a race track testing new Goodyear tires. We drove these cars all day as hard as they could be driven. They all had Enterprise Rental tags on them, and when I asked about that, I was told they would be sold as "Program Cars" after race season. Have you ever driven a rental/demo car like you would your own? Would you like to have that car after 36,000 miles and no warranty?
13. ***Don't buy the extended warranty.*** Take that money and put it in a savings account. You usually can pay for any problems, and have some left over for what these companies want for the extended warranty. I hear "what if the motor or transmission goes out?" Valvoline offers a warranty on your engine if you use their oil up to 300,000 miles. For more details go to: [Valvoline Warranty Info.](#)
14. ***How much is this going to cost?*** Go to [Loan Calculator](#) to find how much the loan will cost you if you are borrowing money to buy your new vehicle.
15. ***Ask for maintenance records.*** If that person you are buying the car from didn't take care of it, you are asking for trouble. Remember: There is always a reason someone is selling a car! We see people all the time that try to partially fix something so they can sell the car to an un-suspecting buyer. ***Always refer to Rule#1!***