

Don't Buy a Used Car Without Reading this E-Book

a.k.a. Avoid the “Lemon Blues”



Looking Out for You and Your Car

www.baautocare.com

Here at BA Auto Care, we get a lot of questions from our customers that are thinking of purchasing a used car. They view a used car purchase as rather risky, and they are worried about buying “a lemon” - a car that proves to be defective and requires major repairs right after the purchase.

A lot of things have changed in the industry to make used car purchases less risky. You can buy a car from a dealer with a limited warranty. Places like CarMax are around now that have a 5-day money back guarantee and a policy of excluding cars that have suffered from flood or frame damage, excessive wear and tear, or excessive repair costs. However, there is a price for this added security. Also, what about the other cars that get rejected??? Where do they end up?

Well, those “defective” cars and many others are out there and available for you to purchase -- most of the time it’s at your own risk.

But, the good news is with a little planning and foresight, you can purchase a used vehicle and eliminate a lot of the risk. This e-book explains how.

All the best in your used car hunt!

Brian England

President - BA Auto Care



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#1. Always, always, always get a pre-purchase inspection -- but check on these things first.

You have to understand, it is impossible to do the kind of pre-purchase inspection required to uncover potential problems with a used vehicle unless you have an experienced technician with appropriate equipment and facilities look over it. Even if you are purchasing a used car that is under warranty from a dealer, you'll want to know whether that car is going to spend more time in the shop versus on the road. The couple hundred dollars you'll spend up front could be worth thousands down the road. But, not every car is even worth getting a pre-purchase inspection done. Here's a list of things you can check out even before you invest in a pre-purchase inspection.

1. Get to know the car you are thinking about buying. Test drive a couple of them. Do some online research and see what kind of problems owners have run into. Check out the Kelly Blue Book value for your local area, so you'll have a good idea how much the car should cost.
2. When you find a car you like, test drive the car under all conditions: in stop & go traffic, at highway speeds, along curving country roads, on hilly terrain, what ever conditions you expect to encounter.
3. Check the brake performance. Make sure it brakes straight and without any vibrations.
4. Check the steering. Make sure the car is holds in a straight line and doesn't pull to one side or the other.

5. Be sure to check out all the vehicle systems: the air conditioner, heater, radio, GPS, CD player, seat adjustment mechanisms, chargers, safety belts, windshield wipers, defoggers, automatic windows, doors, and locks, etc.
6. Note any noise, vibration, harshness and smells. If you notice a moldy smell, don't purchase the car, as it could have been involved in a flood.
7. Check ALL the lights. Front & rear headlights, high beams, brake lights, indoor lights, puddle lights, etc.
8. Check the engine oil. Is it clean? Dirty engine oil is a sign that the owner isn't properly caring for the car. If possible check the inside of the oil filler cap it should be sludge free and if the engine components are visible they should look like new.
9. Check the maintenance record. Make sure all the manufactures recommended services have been performed? (If all the car has had is a few cheap quick lubes forget it and look for a vehicle that has been maintained correctly.) Also check the mileage versus the service records.
10. Get a CarFax report. Again, the mileage on the report should agree with what's on the odometer and the service records.
11. Check over the tires & the body including the trunk. Look for ripples in the doors or fenders.

If the car passes most of these initial checks, then go ahead and have the vehicle evaluated. Be sure to add in the cost of repairs or replacements to your purchase if they are required. And finally use your instinct; **if the deal does not feel right don't buy it!**

#2. Avoid buying a car from a different state.

We are located in Maryland, so in this area it's very easy to end up considering a car from out of the state. After all, there are three states, Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia, easily reached within a couple of hours. But our recommendation is to avoid it if you can. In general it's better to buy in state because you are protected by the consumer laws related to your home state. Also, titling requirements vary from state to state. If you do end up purchasing a car in another state, be sure you know what you need to transfer the title to your state. Some states, like Maryland, require a notarized bill of sale for some vehicles.

Recently we had a customer find a great car for their son in Virginia about 60 miles away. They wanted to have us check it out and had arranged to drive the car to us to check. (Note, this could be a problem too, the last thing you want to do is break down on the road, in a car that's not even yours.)

This car had very low mileage and looked like it was in great shape. All of the arrangements were made to drive the car to our facility. Then, when they got there, at the last moment the seller said no! Take it or leave it!

Now in this instance the son wanted the car; the mom felt comfortable taking the risk and purchasing the car; and the father was worried. Well, in the end, they decided to purchase the car, and it all worked out great. But to avoid dilemmas like this family experienced, don't even look at cars out of state. There is no shortage of used cars. Chances are, with a little patience, that car you are looking for will turn up -- in your home state.

#3. That great online deal, probably isn't quite as great as you think.

Oh, I've had SO many people call me and say, ***“ I found this great deal online, should I get it?”***

My first answer is no, but many times the caller is persistent. They describe the car and how it's such a great deal. They seem to want me to validate their opinion instead of listening to mine.

Buying a car online is very risky, and although it is possible to get a great deal you should prepare for the worse. The last thing you want to do is drive a few hundred miles to pick up a car that doesn't quite look like the photos.

One way to lessen the risk is to have the car checked out by a technician that's local to the area where the car is being sold. (Remember the rule -- always, always, always get a pre-purchase inspection.) You can arrange to have the car transported to a local shop to be checked out. If the seller isn't willing to accommodate this request, find another seller!

Lastly, if you see a great deal online, look for that same car locally. Chances are you'll find something comparable, particularly if you're in a densely populated metro area.



Photo courtesy of John Lloyd's photo stream.

#4. If you are in Maryland, look for a vehicle that's had a safety inspection performed.

Here in Maryland, vehicles are required to undergo a safety inspection prior to sale or transfer. If, for some reason, this inspection hasn't been performed, you'll need to do it in order to complete the titling process, so it's better to get a car that's already been inspected. That way, at least you'll know it's safe to drive to your technician to have the pre-purchase inspection performed. The Maryland Safety Inspection covers a lot of the things you'll be looking out for in your PRE pre-inspection like steering, wheel alignment, suspension, brakes, tires & wheels, fuel system, exhaust system, bumpers, fenders, lights, floor, trunk, doors, handles, latches, mirrors, window glazing, windshield wipers, hood/catches, speedometer, odometer, electrical system, driver's seat, safety belts, motor mounts, gear selection indicator, universal & CV joints, and emissions equipment. Check out our e-booklet on [safety inspections](#) to learn more.

*BA Auto Care is an
Authorized
Inspection Station!*



#5. Be wary of super low mileage on older vehicles.

In addition to finding a car that's been well cared for, you'll want to find one that hasn't been sitting in the garage for much of its life. On average, cars are driven about 14,000 miles each year. If you come across a vehicle that's significantly lower than this, it may not be a good deal. Sludge and carbon can build up and affect the engine.

The other thing to look out for is a car that's had the odometer rolled back. (Yes, it still happens!) Check out the wear on the pedals, a really worn brake pedal on a super low mileage car is a big red flag.



*Photo courtesy of [PhotoSleuth's photostream](#).

#6. Think twice before buying that 2003 Jaguar XK8, even for \$8000.

The Jaguar XK8 is a beautifully styled vehicle and it attracts many people because the older XK8s cost from \$8000 to \$15,000! Very tempting! But there is a problem that makes them worth next to nothing! The engine has a serious built in flaw!

The engine has overhead camshafts that are connected by four chains. In order to keep these chains tight, there are 4 hydraulic timing chain tensioners. The tensioners are manufactured from metal and plastic. When these vehicles reach about 10 years old or around 75,000 miles the plastic fails; the tensioner fails; and the chains jump causing the valve timing to move; then, the pistons hit the valves.



The repairs to the engine when this happens approach the cost of the vehicle.

We've seen cases where this happened and the engine was destroyed on a recently purchased car. What happened? Well, the car was towed to a junk yard because the cost to repair it exceeded what the owner could afford!

In another instance we had a customer who decided to take preemptive action to prevent this from happening to his vehicle. (By the way, if you currently own an XK8 this is a great idea. If you are thinking about buying an XK8 then build this into the cost of buying the car.)

The first step in preventing this from happening is to check to see if the tensioners have been up dated. To do this, the camshaft covers are removed and the two tensioners that are visible are inspected. In the case mentioned above, we took off the right hand cover and could see that there was a brand new, up-dated tensioner. At first glance both I and Ben, our skilled technician, thought great, this is going to save the customer thousands of dollars. My next question to Ben was, could just one tensioner be changed and not the others? We decided not to assume they were all new, and thank goodness we didn't. When we removed the other camshaft cover,



Jag Engine Compartment

When we removed the other camshaft cover,

what did we find but a plastic tensioner! So we moved forward and updated all of the tensioners.

This repair included replacing all four tensioners, the four chains, the guides, seals and gaskets. The cost of a repair like this is between \$2400 to \$4500 depending where you live, and whether or not there are other repairs that should be performed while the front of the engine is apart, for example, belts, crankshaft pulley, sensors etc.



Chains & Tensioners



New Style Tensioner on Left

Suppose we had stopped after seeing the one updated tensioner? This underscores just how important it is to have a top quality technician checking out your car and how important it is to include the cost of projected repairs in the price of your vehicle.

But [Jaguars aren't the only cars to look out for](#). Check out the [true cost to own](#) before you buy.

#7. Make sure your other family members know the deal when it comes to buying a used car.

If you know all the right steps to take when purchasing a used car, but your son, niece or daughter, who you're helping out financially, don't know the deal, you can still get stuck. Share the info!

Recently a sharp looking Audi arrived at our shop along with a very frustrated owner! In tow was the owner's father who was very concerned about the car. His son had recently bought the car and it had been nothing but trouble. It had been at a local repair shop, and after spending thousands of dollars to fix the clutch they could still not drive it because the speedometer didn't work, and the other repair shop did not know what to do. In order to pass the Maryland Safety Inspection the speedometer has to work.

Our service advisor worked out a diagnostic pathway designed to get to the bottom of the problem. Then Ben, one of BA Auto Care's skilled technicians started checking the basics. First he drained the transaxle to check the condition of the oil, and he found metal. The next step was to trace the source of the metal by taking apart the transaxle housing and using a tiny camera to examine the inside. It turned out that the metal contaminating the transaxle had clogged the speedo reluctor so badly that the electronic sensor could not see the spaces on the reluctor plate. Now the next step was a major transmission repair!

Worried there would be other issues the son and his father ended up trading the car in at an Audi dealership and taking a big loss!

This terrible situation could have been avoided with a pre-purchase inspection or at the very least making sure the car had a Maryland Safety Inspection -- Two points covered in this e-book!

To wrap it all up, when it comes to used cars, a bit of preparation can save a lot of stress and money! In order to get your used vehicle titled, if you live in Maryland, here are a few additional things to know. You'll need:

- Proof of ownership: As the buyer (or co-buyer), you will need to submit the title of the vehicle with your name, address, signature, odometer reading, selling price, date and title recorded on the title in the "Assignment of Ownership" section. Be sure you get the signature of the seller/co-seller.
- Proof of Insurance: Insurance information, including the insurer, policy number, and insurance agent must be provided.
- Bill of Sale: You'll need a notarized bill of sale if the vehicle is less than seven years old and if the retail price is more than \$500 less than the vehicle's book value. (This is used to compute the excise tax.)

Still have questions? Stop by BA Auto Care in Columbia, Maryland for a cup of coffee and a free consultation.

Best of luck in securing your "new" used vehicle!



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