



Ever felt tempted to buy a motor vehicle at auction?

Do you think you will get a bargain?

- Motor vehicle auctions are attracting an increasing number of private individuals wishing to find a suitable vehicle often cheaper than traditional sources. As part of our continued commitment to National Consumer Week we would like to offer 10 tips to consider when buying a car from auction.
- If you are an auction novice go along beforehand to get a feel of the environment.
- Research what you want to purchase including estimated value.
- Read the Auction's Terms and Conditions.
- Examine any vehicle you are interested in bidding on. If possible ask to hear the engine running before it enters the sale ring. Take someone with you preferably a car mechanic!
- Check the number of owners. Remember vehicles may have been passed from one trader to another without being registered with DVLA.

- If possible try and buy an ex fleet or hire car. These cars will usually have been serviced regularly by the major companies.
- Check whether mileage is warranted/guarantee or not. If in doubt ask the auction if they have at least carried out a VOSA MoT Mileage history check on the vehicle and ask to see it.
- If you have doubts about the mileage look for tell tale signs of excessive use. Worn carpet and foot pedals are an indication the vehicle may have travelled more miles than indicated on the odometer.
- Budget a maximum bid and stick to it. It is easy for the inexperienced bidder to get carried away with the excitement of the auction and remember you will have to pay the auction commission on top of your winning bid!
- Do not purchase a vehicle from outside the auction. Even though consumer rights are restricted in the auction you may have more protection than buying privately outside the premises. Under auction conditions rights under the sale of goods act are usually excluded. In these circumstances you're buying 'sold as seen' unless the auction terms and conditions state otherwise. Therefore if you buy a faulty or misdescribed vehicle (Including incorrect mileage) it is unlikely you will have any comeback on the auction and they have no legal requirement to divulge the seller. Some auctions do offer a very short cooling off period again this should be stated in the auction terms and conditions.

Buying part worn tyres

In the current economic times there has been an increase in sales of part worn tyres. Tyres are the only point of contact your vehicle has with the road surface and affect the vehicles stability, cornering and braking distances. Their condition is crucial to you and your family's safety.

False Economy?

The average part worn tyre costs £25, and has 4mm of tread (at best) remaining, and the average budget tyre is £50 and usually has 8mm of tread, the true cost of the part worn is actually £10.42 per mm of tread, as opposed to £7.81 for the budget tyre (assuming the tyres are replaced at the 1.6mm legal limit).

Our Advice...

consider buying new budget tyres rather than risking buying part worn tyres, but if you do buy part worn remember the following:-

Check the markings on the sides of the tyre

Part worn tyres must bear the words "Part Worn" in letters a minimum of 4mm high adjacent to the approval mark.



The tyre must show all the appropriate markings for its type and design such as speed rating and load index, being marks that were moulded onto or into the tyre at the time it was manufactured.

Puncture repairs and damage

Any repairs to the tyre must have been done to the appropriate British Standard. Any lacerations in the outside of the tyre deep enough to reach the cord must be no more than 25mm (1 inch) in length or 10% of the section width of the tyre, whichever is the greater.

The tyre must have no internal OR external lumps, bulges or tears caused by the separation or partial failure of its structure or any cord or ply exposed either internally or externally.

Minimum tread depth required

Remember the tread on a tyre disperses water on the road to ensure the tyre grips the road surface.

To be sold legally as a part worn the tyre must have a tread depth of at least 2mm across the full breadth of the tread, and around the entire circumference. Remember the legal limit is 1.6mm of tread across the entire breadth of tread.

Buying cars from eBay sellers

Some people enjoy browsing through the E-bay adverts mostly out of curiosity and often to look for bargains!

However there can be downfalls to buying from e-bay sellers, especially when you are looking for more expensive items such as cars. Some sellers may be out to scam you and others may rip you off with an unroadworthy car.

If you look at the example below there are various tell-tale signs which should alert you to avoid the seller.

An advert appears on E-bay for a car, the listing appears as a classified advert for say £1000. The potential buyer views the advert, with a view to buying the car, so would then email the seller asking for more details.

The important detail here is that the item looks appealing but not all the vehicle details have been disclosed, so they have enticed the potential buyer into contacting them to request further details.

The seller then usually states they want a quick sale and would accept a lower offer. The seller then asks the potential buyer to carry out the sale outside of E-bay. The seller may ask the buyer to pay the money directly into the sellers account, through bank transfer. However once the buyer has transferred the money there is a risk they will not hear from the seller again, in this case – **YOU HAVE BEEN SCAMMED**. Or they might arrange a random place to meet, such as a lay-by on a roadside, where the buyer would pay cash.

The trading standards service does not want consumers falling into these traps; it is easily done, when the seller comes across as reasonable, such as meeting you half way. They might knock some money off and provide you details which sound like you are getting a bargain, these are all tricks to entice a sale.

How to protect yourself

- Carry out a web check on the item, the seller and on any other details which stand out in the advert. A lot of E-bay users do this to check the value of items, carry out further checks on the seller too.
- Read our advice sheet 'Thinking of buying a second hand car'
- It is advisable never agree to pay for the item outside of the auction site or Paypal. If something goes wrong they cannot provide you with any assistance or support.

- Look out for requests to communicate directly to an email address instead of through E-bay, this could be a sign that the seller is attempting to trade outside the realms of E-bay – **AGAIN YOU RUN THE RISK OF LOSING THEIR PROTECTION**
- Avoid requests to use Western Union or other direct (untraceable) money transfer methods
- Reduced prices – If it looks too good to be true ... it usually is.
- Look out for the same item(s) for sale elsewhere at totally different prices and locations
- Avoid requests for payment outside of Paypal, **NEVER PAY CASH!** Again these are **UNTRACEABLE**
- Avoid ANY trader who refuses to show the vehicle (or other item) or excuses like “I’m out of the country” that impede you from seeing the vehicle.
- **NEVER** agree to meet on a lay-by, or any random place, you should meet at the traders address, because if something goes wrong you have a location to return to. If they refuse to meet you at their home or trading address, or provide excuses then avoid trading with the seller.
- Avoid travelling long distances to purchase a vehicle, again this makes it much more difficult to resolve any problems, should something go wrong.

At all times remember BUYER BEWARE!

Roadside car sales



It's a common sight these days. Driving past a lay-by or car park to see some cars there with home made 'for sale' signs in them. Some of these 'sales' may often be a private person genuinely trying to sell their car without having to incur the cost of advertising, but quite often the sales are unscrupulous traders trying to make buyers believe they are buying from a private person and therefore limit the buyers rights.

The reason a trader wants to pose as a private seller is that the buyer has rights when they purchase goods from a trader. If the goods are faulty the buyer can make a claim against the trader, but when goods are purchased from a private seller then in the eyes of the law, if the goods are faulty it's a case of buyer beware, and so it is obvious why some traders would want to take advantage of this situation. If a buyer manages to contact them and say there are faults with the car they just fob them off saying sorry nothing I can do.

Our advice is to avoid buying cars that are just left at the side of the road like this; they can be more trouble than they are worth. But if you do feel you want to try and take advantage of one of these 'bargains' here are some precautions you should take to try and avoid problems later on.

When you make contact with the seller, ask to meet them at their home. If they refuse or give reasons why they don't want you at their home, then that should raise alarm bells. A genuine private seller will always have the 'for sale sign' on their car including when it is parked at their home and so they are always likely to have someone knocking on their door to ask about the car. If they don't want you to know where they live they have probably got something to hide.

Secondly, when you contact the seller ask for the reference number from the vehicle registration document. That number will allow you to go onto Directgov.com and do certain checks on the vehicle such as what the mileage was on its last MOT which will allow you to see if the car has been 'clocked'. If the seller says they have not got it to hand ask to phone back when they have got it. If they avoid giving you this information they are hiding something and do not deal with them.

Lastly if you do go through with the purchase take someone with you who knows about cars to carry out an inspection of the vehicle. This can help avoid problems later on. Don't let the seller convince you that they can only meet you when the light is poor; you need to ensure the car can be properly inspected.

Remember none of the above are unreasonable requests, if the seller refuses any of them our advice is to go elsewhere to buy your car. There are plenty of car traders who trade from car lots who do not try and hide the fact they are in trade. If you do experience problems with cars purchased from one of these traders Trading Standards can assist you. Very often with cars sold from the roadside the seller cannot be traced afterwards and no matter how bad the problem there is very little we can do if the seller cannot be found.

Thinking of buying a second hand car?

Car clocking is still a problem, but now it is really easy to check a cars mileage history. To check a vehicle's MOT and mileage history just go online to www.gov.uk/check-mot-history-vehicle. All you will need is the vehicle registration number and either the MOT test number or the document reference number which is on the V5C registration certificate (V5 Logbook). Following the on screen instructions to access a vehicle's MOT history, records start from 2005. The history includes the mileage at each MOT.

If you're buying privately or travelling far to purchase the car always insist on having this information before going to make the purchase or if you have a Smartphone make sure the documents are available when you inspect the car. If the seller won't let you have this information our advice would be not to proceed with the purchase.