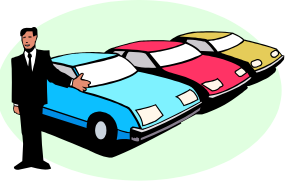


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when it comes time to make the purchase. Fortunately, Pennsylvania has the Automotive Industry Trade Practices regulations, which provide consumers with many protections when it comes to buying a car. These regulations cover numerous aspects of the car buying process, from advertising to the condition of the vehicle.

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Advertising and Representations

One section of the regulations prohibits deceptive advertising and misrepresentation in describing a car and its price. Dealers must state the existence of certain defects or conditions. Advertisements must disclose:

- ✓ The business name and address of the car dealer.
- ✓ *The year, make, and model of the car.*
- ✓ The conditions of sale, including the offer's expiration date and any limitations on the number of vehicles available.
- ✓ *If price is indicated, it must include all charges usual or necessary prior to delivery, such as freight, handling, and dealer preparation charges. **Tax, registration and licensing fees need not be included, however.***

In addition, the regulations also contain detailed provisions about the written agreement given to you when you buy a car. Among these, the regulations require that:

- ✓ A copy of the written contract or agreement of sale, the installment sales contract, an odometer statement and the warranty be provided to the consumer.
- ✓ *The contract must list the car as "new" or "used," and if used must describe the vehicle's prior usage.*

- ✓ The contract must list itemized charges for any item not included in the purchase price.
- ✓ *The dealer must deliver the car within the time specified in the contract or within eight weeks after the contract date.*
- ✓ The dealer must honor the quoted trade-in allowance.
- ✓ *An "As-Is" notice must be attached to the window of a car being sold without a warranty.*

Odometer Rollbacks

It is illegal to disconnect, reset, or replace an odometer for the purpose of changing the number of miles on it. Federal and State laws give protection to consumers who suspect they have purchased a car with a rolled back odometer.



According to law:

- ✓ When a vehicle is transferred, the new owner must be given a written odometer statement disclosing the car's true mileage at the time of transfer, the date of transfer, the buyer's and seller's names and addresses, and the vehicle's make, year, body type and vehicle identification number (VIN #).
- ✓ *It is illegal to tamper with an odometer; sell, use or advertise any device for tampering; or operate a vehicle with a disconnected or non-functional odometer with intent to defraud.*
- ✓ If the seller knows that the mileage has exceeded the 99,999 miles mechanical limit, he must provide that information to the buyer.

Consumers who suspect that they have bought a used car whose odometer was rolled back should follow this procedure:

Write to: Bureau of Motor Vehicles
Licensing-Information Sales
1101 S. Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17104-2516

In your letter, give the serial number and the title number of your car and request a list of previous Pennsylvania owners. There is a small charge for this information.

You will receive a photocopy listing previous title holders, their addresses, and in some cases, the car's mileage at the time of sale if PennDOT has such information available.

If PennDOT records do not disclose the previous mileage, contact the most recent previous private owner (not dealer) and ask how many miles were on the car when it was sold. If the mileage was approximately the same as when you purchased the car, you probably can dismiss your suspicions. To check further, contact the next previous owner for the mileage information.

Take Precautions:

- ✓ Know the reputation of the person or dealer from whom you are purchasing your car.
- ✓ *Obtain the odometer mileage **before** completing the transaction.*
- ✓ Don't fool yourself. A car that is ten years old will not have only 10,000 miles on its odometer.



Used Car Buying Checklist

Use this when you're looking for a used car.

- ✓ Be an educated consumer
- ✓ *Determine your needs and wants first, make a list, and prioritize.*
- ✓ Establish a budget and determine the class of vehicles that fit it.
- ✓ *Narrow selection by makes and models and learn all you can about them.*
- ✓ Research dealerships and sellers.
- ✓ *Know the fair market value and vehicle history of any vehicle you're considering.*
- ✓ Obtain Vehicle Identification Numbers (VINs) and research cars online. Obtain vehicle history reports.
- ✓ *Take test drives and have cars checked by a mechanic.*
- ✓ **ASK QUESTIONS** and consider all loan options.
- ✓ *If you feel hesitant, walk away. There's always another deal.*



Helpful Information Sites

Consumers' Checkbook – CarBargains
www.carbargains.org

Edmunds.com, Inc.
www.edmunds.com

Federal Consumer Information Center
www.pueblo.gsa.gov

National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) Guides Online
www.nadaguides.com

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
www.nhtsa.dot.gov

Carfax
www.carfax.com

Used Car Inspection/Test Drive Checklist

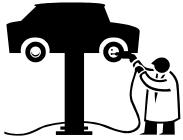
INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Exterior

- ✓ Look for unmatched paint or poor body fit (may indicate collision damage).
- ✓ Check for body filler (use a refrigerator magnet on suspicious spots).
- ✓ Look for rust all around, especially at wheel wells, under doors, in trunk.
- ✓ Musty smell or dampness in trunk may indicate collision damage.
- ✓ If car appears newly painted, why?

Tires

- ✓ Wear should be even on each tire and among the set.
- ✓ Tires must be the same size.
- ✓ Wear should be consistent with odometer mileage.
- ✓ Insist on a spare, jack, and lug wrench.



Suspension

- ✓ Push down and release each corner of car. If it bounces more than once, car may need struts or shocks.
- ✓ Push and pull on each wheel from beside the car. If wheel moves in or out, bearings or CV joints may be in bad condition.
- ✓ Remember that uneven tire wear may indicate suspension problems. If car has new tires, be extra careful in checking suspension.
- ✓ Check for "dog-tracking" by having a friend follow you while driving the car. If rear end of car seems to be sliding to the side, car may have serious frame damage from collision.
- ✓ If front-wheel drive, check CV joint boots on either end of front axles – should be a total of four. If torn or missing, expect to have trouble with expensive joints!

TEST DRIVE CHECKLIST

Driveability

- ✓ Acceleration should be smooth.
- ✓ Pinging may indicate a needed tune-up or may be poor fuel. Some pinging under hard acceleration may be normal.
- ✓ Blue smoke indicates burning oil.
- ✓ There should be no delay between engine speed and speed of car. If there is a delay, car may have transmission problems.
- ✓ If car has a manual transmission, clutch should engage smoothly and should not slip.

Suspension

- ✓ When safe, take hand from the wheel. Car should not pull to one side. It is okay to drift slowly to the right due to the crown of the road.
- ✓ In a parking lot, make a few slow, tight turns in each direction. Turn radio and everything else that makes noise off and roll windows down. Listen carefully for any noise coming from wheels that might indicate CV joint problems. CV joints are expensive to replace and a bad one can be dangerous!
- ✓ Remember to check for "dog-tracking". The inspection list tells how.
- ✓ After a quick stop, car should not rock back and forth separately. If it does, it may need new struts or shocks.

Brakes

- ✓ Make both slow and hard stops.
- ✓ Car should not pull to one side under braking.
- ✓ A spongy or low pedal may indicate leaks or other problems.
- ✓ Squeaking may indicate need for new pads, or may be caused by glazed-over pads.

- ✓ If car shudders under braking, it probably needs new, expensive brake rotors.

Comfort Equipment

- ✓ Check air conditioning for proper operation. A/C repairs and refills are not cheap anymore!
- ✓ Make sure heater and fan work properly. Drive car long enough for engine to warm up.
- ✓ Check operation of defrosters.
- ✓ Make sure all power options work.

IF YOU STILL WANT THE CAR AFTER THE TEST DRIVE AND INSPECTION

- ✓ Take car to a mechanic and have it checked. Make sure compression is tested.
- ✓ Attempt to contact previous owner.



If you feel that you may have been a victim of a violation of the laws governing auto sales, contact the Bucks County Office of Consumer Protection at 1-800-942-2669

Provided as a public service
by the
Bucks County Commissioners

AUTOMOTIVE

Buying A Car



**County of Bucks
Department of
Consumer Protection/
Weights and Measures**

**50 North Main Street, 2nd Floor
Doylestown, PA 18901**

**215-348-7442
1-800-942-2669**

www.buckscounty.org