



# Car Buyers Tips and Checklist

Shopping for a used car can be time-consuming and, at times, unnerving.

**When buying a used car, especially from a private sale, you need to take your rose-coloured glasses off and get a little street-wise. Get to know what you're buying through NRMA Motoring advice (13 11 22), NRMA car reviews and organising an NRMA vehicle inspection.**

The price you should be paying for a used car can be confusing. Do your research so you have the confidence to assess whether the car you're shopping for is a bargain or not. Check out the free NRMA Glasses app for trusted price comparisons.

The implications of not getting a full background check before you buy privately could leave you feeling ripped off and heart-broken. Consider purchasing a CarHistory report. For a relatively small fee you can check the odometer reading, prior insurance claims, finance owing, written-off status and much more. As a More4Members partner, NRMA Members enjoy discounts of up to 40%. More information available online.

# I want a decent car and don't know where to start

Before you go looking, think about the following points. It will make visiting and testing cars more enjoyable and successful:

## Take someone with you

Take a friend or relative when viewing cars privately – it's safer and four eyes are better than two. You may have to make appointments, so allow time to view the car preferably in daylight and in dry conditions.

## Research the car

When you buy privately you do so at your own risk, with minimal recourse once you have handed over your hard-earned cash. Make sure you do your research and utilise buy-back insurance in products like a CarHistory report (available to Members for a discount).

## Finance within your budget

Arrange your finance before you go shopping. A pre-approved loan is like buying with cash – and money talks. Once you find the car you want, it is more likely that you can secure the best price. For a no-nonsense affordable loan with minimal jargon and no ongoing fees (and 1% interest rate discount may apply for Members) call NRMA Car Loans on 1300 732 398 or visit us at [www.nrmacarloans.com.au](http://www.nrmacarloans.com.au).

## Be Aware

There is often outstanding finance on a car. This can result in repossession even after you've paid for it! A CarHistory report with PPSR (Personal Property Security Register, formerly REVs check) warns you before you part with your cash and protects you afterwards.

## Check if the vehicle is registered

Make sure the vehicle is registered in NSW or ACT. If not, it will need to be re-registered and 'blue slipped' for NSW. You should check which insurer the CTP (green slip) policy is with, and confirm that the policy is current, as any unpaid CTP policy may transfer to you.

Don't settle on the first car you see. If you want expert advice contact NRMA or visit us online [mynrma.com.au](http://mynrma.com.au). Book a vehicle inspection with our select group of NRMA Approved Repairers, at your local MotorServe store, or via our mobile service offering.

**NRMA Car Loans: Competitive rates, fast and easy**  
Call 1300 732 398 to discuss options | [mynrma.com.au/carloans](http://mynrma.com.au/carloans)





**NRMA Motoring Advice | Free to Members | Call 13 11 22**



# I'm ready to start looking at a car

When looking for a car take time to check out several cars before you select the one you want. Here are some tips on what's hot, and what's not! Remember to record what you find, and use the information to bargain down the price.

## Inspection Checklist

Where possible always inspect in bright light and in dry conditions. A good way to look at car bodywork is to stand back from the car (front and rear) and look down the side of the vehicle. This will highlight small dents and creases. Also look at the gaps between the body panels and doors – they should be equal in width and flush.

### ☐ Accident damage or rust

Check inside the boot, the floor wells, doors and lower sills for red or other dark stains, dimpled or bubbled paint. Use a soft fridge magnet to check panels for plastic body filler. A vinyl roof may conceal rust or other damage.

### ☐ Hail damage

Found mainly on horizontal panel surfaces (e.g. bonnet, roof, boot lid). If hail damage is evident, for insurance check with your insurance company - they may have conditions.

### ☐ Panel fitment

Loose panels may indicate accident damage or that the car has been regularly driven over rough roads.

### ☐ Doors and boot lid/tailgate

Catches should close firmly. Rubber seals can perish over time so check these.

### ☐ Paint

Look for colour variation, overspraying, dents or ripples.

### ☐ Upholstery, trim and carpets

Check for wear and tear.

## Under the bonnet

### ☐ Engine number and VIN (vehicle identification number) / body number

These numbers must match the numbers on the Certificate of Registration. Check for signs of interference - scratches, grind marks, drill holes etc. They could indicate illegal interference with the numbers.

### ☐ Year and month of manufacture

Check these are as advertised by inspecting the built date plate. See owner Manual for location.

### ☐ Engine oil

Check for correct oil level and oil condition - for contamination – milky appearance (oil & water mixed) indicates blown head gasket or cylinder head problem.

- ☐ **Engine at idle**  
Listen for irregular running, or any knocking/rattling noises including during acceleration.

- ☐ **Radiator coolant**  
Should be clean and brightly coloured. Oil in the coolant may indicate a cracked cylinder-head or a leaking gasket.

- ☐ **Radiator cooler fins and core tubes**  
Check for corrosion or damage.

- ☐ **Battery and mounting platform/bracket**  
Check for acid corrosion.

## Underneath the car

- ☐ **Tyres (including the spare)**  
Check for uneven wear and damage.
- ☐ **Oil leaks**  
Look for signs of leaks in engine, transmission, axles, brakes, power steering and shock absorbers.
- ☐ **Exhaust system**  
Fumes or excessive noise indicates holes or rust in the pipes or mufflers.

## Inside and outside the car

- ☐ **Seat-belts**  
Check condition & operation of belts, buckles, adjusters and ensure belts retract.
- ☐ **Lights**  
Check the operation of all lights– head lights, park lights, reverse lights, number plate lights and indicator lights .
- ☐ If the vehicle is fitted with ABS and/or SRS (air bag), check that the dashboard warning light/s illuminates for a short time when the ignition is turned on.
- ☐ **Equipment and accessories**  
Check airconditioning, ventilation fan, electric windows, sound system, etc. Inoperative items can be expensive to repair or replace.

- ☐ **Jack and tool-kit**  
These items should be in place and in serviceable condition.

## Taking the car for a test drive

**IMPORTANT:** Before taking the car for a test drive, check with the seller about your legal liability if an accident should occur.

- ☐ **Steering**  
Check for excessive “free travel (free movement)” or pulling to one side on straight roads indicate suspension or incorrect wheel alignment problems.
- ☐ **Brakes**  
Make sure that the car stops smoothly and in a straight line when breaks are applied. The pedal should not sink to the floor or feel spongy and the steering wheel does not vibrate when brakes applied at speed.
- ☐ **Exhaust**  
Check for smoke emission at ideal and on acceleration. Blue smoke indicates engine oil burning in cylinders.
- ☐ **Engine**  
Should run smoothly (accelerating, decelerating and cruising) and the water temperature gauge (if fitted) should stay in the “safe” range. Rattling or knocking sounds could mean incorrect tuning or excessive wear.
- ☐ **Transmission**  
Check for gear changes (manual or automatic) should be smooth, without any rattles or knocking noises. On front-wheel drive vehicles, knocking noise when turning indicates worn constant-velocity joints (CV joints).
- ☐ **Suspension and bodywork**  
Listen for rattles when you drive over bumps. Check shock absorbers for leaking oil.

# I've found the one . . . I think(?)

Once you have compared vehicles and have narrowed down your search to one or two cars, the next step is to use the checklist below with your PPSR report to gain bargaining power.

**You should make sure you are satisfied with all the answers to the questions in the form below. If you aren't, think twice about buying that car. There's plenty of others to choose from.**

1. Check that the seller's driver's licence matches the name on the registration papers. Does it?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. If not, who is the owner?

3. Why are they selling the car?

4. How long have they owned the vehicle?

Years

5. Is a loan outstanding on the car and is the car secured against it?

☐ Yes ☐ No

See next page if there is finance owing on the vehicle

6. Has the vehicle had any accident damage repaired?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what and when?

7. Does the seller have the car's 'service book' showing services completed, and stamped by the Dealer/Service Centre?

☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Do they have copies of workshop invoices for any work or services carried out?

☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Ask to see the Rego and CTP papers. You'll want these to record the vehicle details. How much Rego and CTP remains?

Rego expiry date   /   /

CTP expiry date   /   /

**Now write down the vehicle identification details from the Registration Papers – you'll need them to do a PPSR check.** This tells you if there is any money owing on the vehicle or if it has been reported stolen

VIN/Chassis number:

Engine Number:

Registration number:

(Is it a NSW plate?):

☐ NSW ☐ Other

You can refer to the vehicle's handbook to locate the Chassis/VIN number. Now check these on the vehicle itself. Make sure they match. **IMPORTANT** – You should get a PPSR check no more than 24 hours before you buy the vehicle. If you are happy with the results of this check you can start negotiating with the seller!

Price agreed (Subject to PPSR check):

\$

Seller's name (print):

Seller's signature:

Address from Vehicle Registration:

Seller's driver's licence number:

Date:

/   /

# Outstanding Debt on the Vehicle?

## Protect yourself

1. Ask the seller to obtain a payout figure in writing from the financier.
2. Purchase a PPSR certificate for protection against repossession of the vehicle due to financial interests that have not been registered with PPSR.
3. Make out two (2) separate cheques – one payable to the financier for the total payout figure, and the other to the seller for the balance. **Never pay the seller the full amount or leave it to them to pay their outstanding loan as you have no guarantee that he/she will pay out the debt.**
4. **Ask the seller and financier for a receipt.** This should be done at the financier's office. Some lenders, including NRMA Car Loans, will pay the finance company directly. It is also recommended that you

obtain a copy of the letter of discharge from the financier, which confirms that they no longer have an interest in the vehicle. Keep this letter with your PPSR Certificate.

5. Make sure that you finalise the purchase of the vehicle before midnight of the day after the certificate is purchased. That is, if you buy PPSR Certificate on a Thursday, then you must pay for the vehicle (hand over the cheques to the financier and the seller) before midnight of the Friday. This sequence of events ensures that the PPSR Certificate remains a valid legal document.

Please note that, as financiers have 14 days in which to cancel their interests with PPSR once a debt has been paid out, the certificate may still show the financial encumbrance warning even though you have paid out the debt. The letter of discharge (or copy) from the financier is proof that the seller's debt has been paid out.

**The seller can pay out the loan themselves, but it takes up to two weeks for a clear title to process. This means that your PPSR check will still show finance owing, and won't protect you.**

## Think you've found your next car?

Once you've conducted your own comprehensive background check, you can get expert advice from our select group of NRMA Approved Repairers and NRMA MotorServe locations who can conduct a Vehicle Inspection for you. Visit [mynrma.com.au](http://mynrma.com.au) to find the nearest one in your area.

## Can the Seller Pay the Outstanding Debt?

The Seller can pay out the loan themselves, but you will need to check this has been done by updating the PPSR Certificate no more than 24 hours before you plan to purchase the vehicle.

# Finally, I've got my new car!



## Before you drive away make sure the seller has given you:

- ☐ all keys including those for the ignition, glove box, boot and alarm
- ☐ the service books, owner's manual and log book
- ☐ instructions for working and de-activating any alarm
- ☐ location of the hidden ignition switch if there is one
- ☐ radio security number

## Transferring the car into your name

**After you purchase the vehicle, you must transfer ownership of the vehicle to your name within 14 days, either online or in person at an RMS registry or service center. See the RMS website for further details. If you go into an RMS registry in person you will need:**

- ☐ your proof of purchase
- ☐ at least two forms of identification
- ☐ money to pay the stamp duty and transfer fee.

More information is available from the RMS Customer Service line on 132 213, in Sydney or Wollongong, or from your local Motor Registry.

## Car Buyers' Receipt Form

Complete this form at point of purchase to use as a receipt. Ensure that the seller signs it.

Vehicle make:

Vehicle model:

Year of manufacture:

  /   /    

VIN:

               

Chassis number:

               

Colour:

Registration number:

               

Registration expiry date:

  /   /    

Agreed price:

\$

Amount paid:

\$

Balance remaining:

\$

Date:

  /   /    

Buyer name:

Seller name:

Seller address:

Seller signature:



# Getting the car on the road

## Get Roadside Assistance coverage

☎ 13 11 11

🖱 [mynrma.com.au/roadside-assistance](http://mynrma.com.au/roadside-assistance)

## Consider Insurance coverage for CTP and Comprehensive insurance

☎ 132 132

🖱 [nrma.com.au](http://nrma.com.au)

## Register your vehicle with Roads and Maritime Services (RMS)

☎ 132 213

🖱 [rms.nsw.gov.au](http://rms.nsw.gov.au)

## Useful contacts

### CarHistory report

Check the vehicle history before you buy. NRMA Member prices via More4Members

🖱 [mynrma.com.au/members/member-benefit/carhistory.htm](http://mynrma.com.au/members/member-benefit/carhistory.htm)

### NRMA Car Loans

☎ 1300 732 398

🖱 [mynrma.com.au/carloans](http://mynrma.com.au/carloans)

