

Vehicle Buying And Selling Advice



Buying or selling a vehicle is probably the most expensive commitment you could make second to buying a house. Added to this it is unlikely that you will have the security of legal advice, solicitors, agents etc. to protect the transaction and moreover, your money. The process of buying or selling a vehicle is usually straightforward but both buyers and sellers can leave themselves open to becoming the victim of fraud or other crimes.

Be careful not to let the excitement of buying or selling a vehicle compromise your safety or your money. And remember, if it looks too good to be true, it usually is.

The advice below is to help you avoid being a victim of vehicle related crime, including fraud.

BUYING A USED VEHICLE

1. DO YOUR RESEARCH

Find out about the model of car that you want to buy, check that the car you are looking at is of the correct specification. When buying a second-hand vehicle you should make sure that the vehicle you are buying is the property of the seller and has not been stolen. A history check will also identify whether the given vehicle has been reported as an insurance write-off, has any outstanding finance on it or mileage inconsistencies. Do your own history check. This will protect you and will give you current information for the vehicle. Do not accept a history check from the vendor; it may be false or at best out of date, it is best to do or repeat the check after viewing the vehicle and its documents. The following are some of the organisations that provide this service:

Autotrader: www.vehiclecheck.co.uk 0844 470 3708

DesperateSeller: <http://www.desperateseller.co.uk/carcheck/index.asp>

eBay: www.ebay.co.uk/motors/services/vsr/

Exchange and Mart: www.exchangeandmart.co.uk/asp/index.asp?Ink=115_5

Motors: www.motors.co.uk/cars/features/our-history-check-explained

Pistonheads: www.pistonheads.com/HPICarCheck

Experian AutoCheck: www.autocheck.co.uk

HPI Limited: www.hpi.co.uk

If you think the car is stolen, report this to your local police. However, the Police and the above web sites cannot confirm ownership details – they can only confirm the status of the genuine vehicle with the registration number and other vehicle details given.

2. CONTACT DETAILS

When buying privately it's wise to do your research on the seller as well as the vehicle. Get a landline telephone number but you should be aware that it could be for a public telephone box or might transfer to another phone. Always meet a private seller at their home address, check the car is registered on the V5c to that address and be sure the seller resides there. If you feel unhappy with the other party trust your instincts and walk away. Do not be tempted by that elusive bargain.

3. VEHICLE NUMBERS & MARKS

Check that the vehicle identification numbers (VIN) matches that on the documents, and has not been tampered with. The VIN number is in at least three places on a vehicle. The 'visible' VIN plate is under the windscreen, on the nearside (left) of the car, under where the tax disc should be. The 'VIN plate/sticker' will normally be somewhere under the bonnet. There will be a number stamped in the main body that is located differently for each type of vehicle. Be very wary if there are any signs that etching or numbers have been tampered with or removed. Make sure that the vehicle registration document (V5c) has not been tampered with and is watermarked. Compare the document with another V5c or look at the V5c for your own vehicle. Check the V5c is not stolen. See the DVLA website for more details.



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4. DOCUMENTS

Do not buy a vehicle if the seller cannot produce the vehicle registration document and other documentation (e.g. MOT or, for a new vehicle, the purchasing correspondence). Check that the MOT certificate is valid at www.motinfo.gov.uk (you will need the Test Number from the MOT certificate to do this). Check the vehicle handbooks and confirm the service history if possible.

5. INSPECTION

Consider having the vehicle professionally examined before you buy, either through a motoring association, private company or garage. This will give you more safety with your transaction.

6. PAYING

There are different ways you can pay for a vehicle – cash, cheque, banker's draft, bank transfer or ESCROW. Choose the method that works for you but be aware of the potential dangers. A genuine seller should accept a small cash deposit; do not be pressured into making a payment in full when you first see the vehicle. Be very careful about how and where the hand over of cash and the vehicle is to take place. It is dangerous carrying cash, especially when you're going to meet a stranger, so use your common sense and always have someone with you. Cash, cheques and banker's drafts can be forged or counterfeit and your seller is advised not to accept these. NEVER pay using a money transfer company such as Western Union or Moneygram – these exist for transferring money between people who know each other. Bank transfers are quicker using the new 'Faster Payments' system. An immediate bank transfer can be made using the CHAPS system for a nominal fee, (£20-£30). Consider meeting the buyer at your bank and completing the transaction there. CHAPS payments are irrevocable. ESCROW is safe way of paying for a vehicle but make sure that the company is registered with HMRC. Be careful when using ESCROW or Shipping web sites as many are bogus and set up by fraudsters. See the Metropolitan Police Fraud Alert web pages about money transfer, cashback and ESCROW.

7. INTERNET

The Internet can be a source of bargains and is increasingly popular and useful. However it is also used by criminals to sell vehicles that are stolen or do not exist, often using pictures and details of genuine vehicles and stolen or false identities. Most sites provide safeguards for buyers and sellers. Understand the rules of the site and how it works. If you buy via the web, or you win an auction view the vehicle and make all the above checks before paying for your vehicle.

SELLING A VEHICLE

1. ADVERTISING

Decide where best to advertise your vehicle, in your local newspaper, in a motoring magazine or nationally via the Internet. Understand the rules of the publication or Internet site.

2. PERSONAL DETAILS

You should be prepared to provide several different ways that people can get in contact with you – email address mobile telephone number or landline.

3. REPLIES TO ADVERTS

When selling your vehicle, be aware that thieves can pose as potential buyers. They may ask up front for details of the vehicle or for your personal details and could use this information to create their own fake 'cloned' ad. If they're a genuine buyer, they will come and check the vehicle, do not disclose VIN and other identification numbers until the potential buyer is with you and the vehicle.

4. DEALING WITH BUYERS OVERSEAS

Beware of emails from abroad, offering to buy your vehicle without seeing it and offering to make over-payments. Also beware of bogus shipping or ESCROW companies recommended by the buyer.

5. INSPECTING DOCUMENTS

Let the buyer inspect the documents but do not let them make copies or take photos of them. Be aware that mobile phones often contain a camera!



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6. TEST DRIVES

Always check that the person has a valid driving license and insurance to drive your vehicle. Never let the buyer go on a test drive alone. They may not come back. Don't leave the buyer alone with your keys, and never get out of the vehicle to allow a test drive leaving the keys in the ignition. Thieves have been known to steal car keys by swapping them with similar keys.

7. PAYMENT

There are different ways people can pay for a vehicle – cash, cheque, banker's draft, bank transfer or ESCROW. Choose the method that works best for you but be aware of the potential issues. Be very careful about how and where the hand over of the cash and vehicle is to take place. It is dangerous carrying cash, especially when you're going to meet a stranger, so use your common sense and always have someone with you. Cash could be counterfeit so double check it. If accepting cash, consider meeting the buyer at your bank and paying the money straight in to your account. Cheques and banker's drafts can be forged or counterfeit and you may not find this out until after your car has gone and you may lose the money, even it has 'cleared'. Do not accept an overpayment where you then have to refund money or pay money to a third party. Bank transfers are quicker using the new 'Faster Payments' system. An immediate bank transfer can be made using the CHAPS system for a nominal fee, (£20-£30). CHAPS payments are irrevocable. Consider meeting the buyer at their bank and completing the transaction there. ESCROW is safe way of receiving payment for a vehicle but make sure that the company is registered with HMRC. Be careful when using ESCROW or shipping services as many are bogus and set up by fraudsters. See the Metropolitan Police Fraud Alert web pages about money transfer, criminal cashback and bogus ESCROW sites.

FURTHER INFORMATION

There are many sources of additional information. Understand the terms and conditions on the website or provided by the advertiser, also read through their advice about buying and selling.

FRAUD ALERT

For advice on criminal cashback and other frauds that may be attempted against vehicle sellers and buyers, and how to report spam emails go to. www.met.police.uk/fraudalert

OTHER USEFUL WEB SITES:

Office of Fair Trading (OFT): www.of.gov.uk/Consumer/default.htm

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA): www.dvla.gov.uk/vehicles.aspx

Direct.Gov web page: www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/index.htm

The basic details of a vehicle can be checked on the web site: www.vehiclelicence.gov.uk

MOT test certificates can be checked at: www.motinfo.gov.uk or by phoning 0870 330 044.

Bank payments advice. (CHAPS): www.apacs.org.uk/payment_options/index.html

Escrow information: www.escrowpolice.org and www.escrow-fraud.com

The UK Money Transmitters Association web site shows a list of their member companies who are registered with the HMRC. <http://www.ukmta.org/directory.aspx>

Get Safe On Line: www.getsafeonline.org Search for Escrow or [click here](#)

Trading Standards: www.tradingstandards.gov.uk Consumer Direct: 08454 040506



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