

As Used Car Listings Boom, Car Shoppers Should Watch Out for Common Scams

Autotrader experts offer tips to avoid fraud

ATLANTA, June 24, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- Opportunities to buy used cars are getting better each year, as indicated by the surge in used and certified pre-owned vehicle listings on Autotrader (up 4 percent and 12 percent year-over-year, respectively). With more variety than ever, shoppers have plenty of choices of not only which car to buy, but also who and where to buy it from. As the summer car-buying season begins, Autotrader experts warn buyers to be cautious of common car-buying scams that heat up as the weather gets warmer.

"There are many traps that shoppers can fall into when buying a car, so we advise taking it slow and avoiding any deal that seems too good to be true," says Brian Moody, Autotrader site editor. "While it's easy to get wrapped up in excitement or get your heart set on a certain car, shoppers who rush their purchase decision are more likely to overlook red flags or agree to unusual requests from the seller."

Autotrader's editorial team offers the following tips to help shoppers avoid being scammed:

- **Don't Put Down a Deposit.** A popular scam involves a seller requesting money via a wire transfer to "hold" the car or release it from a foreign country. Oftentimes the seller will vanish after the money is transferred, so shoppers should not put down a deposit unless they know the seller personally or they are buying the car from a reputable, highly-rated dealership.
- **Watch for Title-Washing.** Title washing occurs when a seller forges the car's title or uses a stolen or blank title to cover up the vehicle's history. This may happen if the insurance company has declared the car a total loss, such as in the event of extreme flood damage or severe accident damage. Shoppers should always run a vehicle history report, since title washing does not wipe out the computer records that result from a police report, an auto auction sale or an insurance payout.
- **Check for Damage.** Getting a vehicle history report is a great first step, but buyers should always have the car checked by a trusted mechanic, as bodywork or paintwork may be omitted from the report – especially if a previous owner paid for those repairs without filing an insurance claim. The report is simply an initial reading to be verified by a full inspection.
- **Verify the Odometer Reading.** While less common than title washing, odometer fraud is still prevalent, as tampering on digital odometers may be difficult to detect. Check the mileage against the vehicle history report and steer clear if there is a large discrepancy.
- **Check for Theft.** While it may seem like a no-brainer, you should always run the car's vehicle identification number (VIN) through the National Insurance Crime Bureau's [VINCheck™ database](#) before you sign the papers, as thieves may have a title reissued for a car that does not belong to them.

For more information about these scams and how to avoid them, visit:

<http://www.autotrader.com/research/article/car-reviews/227880/buying-a-car-common-scams-to-consider.jsp>.

Autotrader encourages consumers to report on suspicious activity they may see on Autotrader.com by visiting <http://www.autotrader.com/fraud>.

About Autotrader

Autotrader is the most visited third-party car shopping site, with the most engaged audience of in-market shoppers. As the foremost authority on automotive consumer insights and expert in online and mobile marketing, Autotrader makes the car shopping

experience easy and fun for today's empowered consumer looking to find or sell the perfect new, used or Certified Pre-Owned car. Using technology, shopper insights and local market guidance, Autotrader's comprehensive marketing solutions guide dealers to personalized digital marketing strategies that grow brand, drive traffic and connect the online and in-store shopping experience.

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