

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2018

FALL... ON THE ROAD

- Top tips for buying a teen their first car
 - How to recognize potential brake problems
 - How to prepare for an out-of-town breakdown

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE

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Top tips for buying a teen their first car

Selecting a first car for a teenage son or daughter can be challenging. Newly licensed drivers probably want something sporty that also looks cool, while their parents no doubt want them behind the wheel of something sturdy, safe and reliable.

According to the experts at Edmunds.com, an automotive research and advice group, involving teens in the process of selecting a car helps teach them responsibility and learn lessons about money that may help them make smart choices in the future.

- **Manage expectations.** Cars are generous gifts and not something teenagers have a right to. Teenagers may not realize the expenses involved in acquiring, running and insuring a vehicle. Parents can explain all of these factors. Unless the teen has enough money to buy his or her own car, the final call is up to the parents on how much to spend and which vehicle to choose.

- **Note that bigger isn't always better.** Some parents think their teens will be safer in a truck or SUV. While large vehicles may fare slightly better in a crash, they can be more cumbersome to park and drive, especially for novices. A large vehicle may

tempt teens to pile in friends for a Saturday night, but research indicates the risk of a crash increases with multiple teens in a car.

- **Choose safety over looks.** Safety should be the top priority. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, teen drivers between the ages of 16 and 19 are four times more likely to crash than older drivers. Choose a vehicle with a high safety rating over one that looks stylish or comes equipped with distracting bells and whistles.

- **Pass down the family roadster.** Teenagers may anticipate being handed the keys to a brand-new or previously owned vehicle off of a dealership lot. But giving him or her a set of keys to a car already in the driveway may be more practical. Everyone involved already knows the history, driving capabilities, safety statistics, and potential quirks of cars that have been in the family for years. It may not be flashy, but cars already in the driveway will get teenagers from point A to point B just as effectively as those currently sitting idle on the dealership lot.

Outfitting a new teen driver with a car requires careful research.



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The disclaimer “Objects in mirror are closer than they appear” is featured on passenger-side mirrors of vehicles manufactured in the United States, Canada, India, Korea, and Australia. These mirrors are convex, which means they distort the size of objects viewed in the mirror, and as such, distorts the perception of how close or far away objects are from the driver’s car. However, this distortion allows for the reflection of a wider field of view on the side of the vehicle to help eliminate blind spots. In the United States and Canada, driver’s side mirrors are flat or “planar.” Dual convex mirrors are not currently the norm on vehicles manufactured in North America based on requirements implemented by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 111 and the Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 111. Elsewhere, such as in Europe, dual convex mirrors are included on vehicles. Many automotive companies support having two convex mirrors on the sides of cars to eliminate blind spots, as well as reduce the driver’s need to twist his head to the left when turning or changing lanes. However, flat mirrors have been required to avoid distortion and give drivers the most accurate assessment of traffic to their left for changing lanes, called “unit magnification.” This may soon change, though. According to a 2013 statement from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, “The agency intends to reevaluate existing side-mirror requirements (FMVSS No. 111) to determine whether convex mirrors should be harmonized with European requirements.” Currently, drivers can modify their driver’s-side mirrors to include a convex mirror add-on, as long as the mirrors also have the required flat portion.



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How to recognize potential brake problems



Maintaining a vehicle is more than just a way to protect one's financial investment. Vehicle maintenance can protect against accidents and make the road safer for drivers and their passengers as well as their fellow motorists.

Fully functioning brakes are an important component of automotive safety. In its 2015 Crash Stats report, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said that brake-related problems accounted for 22 percent of crashes where vehicular failure was cited as the cause of the collision. Bad brakes are particularly notorious for rear-end collisions. Faulty, worn brake lines, antilock brake system malfunctions and worn brake pads and discs are some potential brake problems.

It is important that motorists learn to recognize the first symptoms of brake trouble so they can address issues before they put drivers, their passengers and other motorists at risk of accident or injury.

- **Unusual noises:** Screeching, grinding, rubbing, and high-pitched sounds are common indicators that brake pads, rotors and other parts of the braking system need attention. Worn pads can cause damage to other vehicle parts, resulting in more expensive repairs if they're not addressed promptly.

- **Pulling:** If the car pulls to one side when applying the brakes, this may indicate brake pad linings are wearing

See **Brake problems** page 5B

DRIVERS MUST address symptoms of a faulty braking system early on to reduce their risk of accidents.

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Fluids to check before your next road trip

For many traveling enthusiasts, few things are more enticing than the open road. Road trips have long been popular, and that popularity appears to be on the rise. According to a report from MMGY Global, a travel and hospitality marketing firm, road trips represented 39 percent of vacations taken by United States travelers in 2016. Road trips also remain popular in Canada, where vast, rugged terrain makes for idyllic trips.

Before embarking on road trips, motorists would be wise to inspect their vehicles to

See **Fluids** page 7B

Brake problems • From page 4B

down unevenly. A brake adjustment may be necessary. Pulling also may be indicative of an object or debris caught in the brake fluid.

- **Less responsive:** If when pressing on the brake pedal the brakes just do not seem to be as effective as they once were, or it is necessary to press the pedal harder for the brakes to engage, there may be a brake fluid leak or an air leak. Check under the vehicle to see if any fluids are pooling.

- **Pungent odors:** Firestone Tire Company says a burning smell may be indicative of worn out brake pads and friction on the tires. Each of these issues require immediate attention.

- **Vibrations:** Certain vibrations may indicate brake issues. Rotors can become warped from metal-on-metal rubbing, potentially leading to a failure of the vehicle to brake properly. Vibrations also may indicate tires are misaligned. These problems can be properly assessed by a trained mechanic.

Do not let potential brake problems go unchecked. Keeping brakes in good working order helps drivers stop more readily and avoid collisions.

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Why do brake rotors warp?

Braking systems are comprised of various components, including rotors. Rotors are large metal discs that can be seen behind the wheels of the car. Rotors can sometimes appear to warp, and many drivers may question why this occurs or if this is a significant problem.

Rotors cannot really warp. Automotive experts note that rotors are metal discs that are cast under extreme heat conditions. It would take a similar application of heat by the braking system for rotors to actually bend, which is impossible. Other factors make rotors appear to be warped, so describing such rotors as “warped” is an easy way to explain the problem to vehicle owners.

For brakes to work correctly, brake pads must be applied squarely and evenly against the rotor. But friction can cause some brake pad materials to form residue on certain areas of the rotor, eventually contributing to uneven rotor surface levels. Some spots become thicker, while others may thin out.

Drivers’ own habits, including their braking tendencies, can contribute to uneven rotors. The automotive advice resource Your Mechanic says that riding the brakes for prolonged periods of time can cause hot brake pads to “paint” the rotors. So constant braking should be avoided.

Drivers also can shift into a lower gear when driving

downhill so that prolonged braking is unnecessary. Also, avoiding frequent hard braking may help. People who live in an area where they’re hard on the brakes either because of hilly terrain or traffic may find such environments can take a toll on the performance of their vehicles’ brake systems.

Brake system issues, such as front brakes having to work harder than rear brakes, or over-torquing when wheels are installed, also may cause rotors to warp, advise automotive experts at Kal Tires. Moss Motoring also states that new pads and brake pads need to be fitted correctly and properly “bedded.” Bedding is the initial transfer of friction material from pad to the disc to form a smooth, uniform layer. Break-in instructions should be included with new brake installation.

Warped rotors can cause symptoms such as squeaky sounds and lead to jittery feelings in the car when brakes are applied. Such rotors also can cause the vehicle to vibrate when coming to a stop.

If warped rotors seem to be an issue, mechanics may be able to put thicker rotors into a lathe to smooth out the residue and restore an even surface — but the problem can come back. It is usually best to replace rotors if they are causing severe vibrations or issues when braking.



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Fluids • From page 5B

ensure their getaways are not derailed by car troubles.

• **Brake fluid:** Squeaky brakes are not the only potential indicator of brake problems. Brake fluid, which should always be topped off before beginning a road trip, also might shed light on potentially serious problems. According to the National Motorists Association, brake fluid looks honey-like and translucent when fresh. A puddle beneath a vehicle that is clear to brown and slick indicates a brake fluid leak, which can ultimately lead to a complete failure of the brakes. The NMA recommends brake fluid be changed at least once every three to four years.

• **Transmission fluid:** When fresh, transmission fluid is red, darkening over time. However, transmission fluid should never appear brown or black, which indicates potential internal damage to the transmission. To determine if there are any issues with the transmission fluid, the NMA recommends drivers wipe a cool dipstick between their thumb and index finger. If even the slightest bit of grit is felt when wiping the dipstick, the transmission is likely in need of work.

• **Oil:** Drivers should change their vehicles' oil before embarking on road trips,

especially if such trips will be lengthy. The NMA notes that fresh oil is light to dark amber and translucent, and that is how oil typically looks immediately after an oil change. Oil darkens over time, and that is natural (black oil indicates it's time for an oil change). However, oil that appears cloudy or milky indicates that coolant is getting into the oil, perhaps due to gasket problems. Drivers who are not getting their vehicles' oil changed before a road trip should at least check their oil before leaving to inspect the color of the oil and ensure the vehicle has enough oil.

• **Windshield washer fluid:** The unknown of the open road is part of what makes it so appealing. While many road trippers plan their trips during the summer and fall when the weather tends to be both pleasant and predictable, there's no guarantee inclement weather won't rear its ugly head. Filling the windshield washer fluid reservoir before embarking on a trip ensures drivers' visibility won't be adversely affected by unforeseen issues that can soil windshields.

Checking fluids before embarking on a road trip can help drivers avoid breakdowns and ensure a safe, fun trip.



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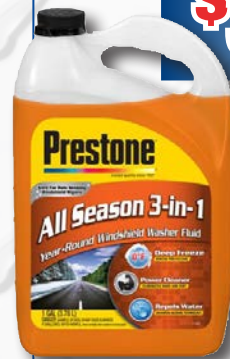
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Three tips to drive more efficiently

Unlicensed drivers learning to drive are often taught the benefits of defensive driving. Safety is often the focus of such lessons, but the benefits of driving safely and efficiently extend far beyond safety.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, aggressive driving can lower gas mileage by roughly 15 to 30 percent at highway speeds. In addition, a 2017 study from researchers at the DOE's Oak Ridge National Laboratory found that aggressive driving can contribute to a reduce fuel ef-

See **Tips** page 9B

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Tips • From page 8B

efficiency by as much as 40 percent in stop-and-go traffic.

Speeding as well as rapid acceleration and braking are hallmarks of aggressive driving, and each of these habits puts drivers, their passengers and other motorists at risk of accident and injury. By taking these steps to drive more efficiently, drivers can save money and potentially even lives.

1. Avoid rooftop cargo.

Rooftop cargo units can be beneficial for family vacations or other extended getaways. But using rooftop cargo boxes as traveling storage units for items you don't need on a daily basis or simply keeping empty units attached to vehicle roofs compromises fuel efficiency. Rooftop cargo bins increase the aerodynamic drag on vehicles, forcing them to burn more fuel than they would need to burn while moving without anything attached to the roof. DOE estimates suggest that large, blunt rooftop cargo boxes can reduce fuel efficiency by as much as 25 percent when a vehicle is moving at speeds between 65 and 75 miles per hour.

2. Don't treat your trunk like a closet.

Trunks are not closets, so resist the temptation to use them to store golf clubs and other items that are better stored in a house or garage. Research has indicated that an extra 100 pounds in a vehicle can reduce gas mileage by about one percent. Because that figure is based on the percentage of extra weight relative to the vehicle's weight, drivers of small vehicles may find using their trunks as closets to be especially costly and inefficient.

3. Use cruise control when possible.

Cruise control makes it possible for vehicles to maintain constant speeds. That helps drivers ensure they are always obeying the speed limit, and it keeps cars from the constant acceleration and deceleration that wastes fuel.

Efficient driving is safe, cost-effective and eco-friendly. With some simple strategies, drivers can do their part to protect the planet and make roads safer, all while saving money.

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What are car subscription services?

For auto enthusiasts, few things can rival the excitement of getting behind the wheel. In the past, getting behind the wheel first required drivers to buy, lease or rent a vehicle. But a new option is drawing interest from drivers.

Car subscription services are in their infancy, so the options available to drivers are changing. But understanding car subscription services may give motorists on the lookout for new wheels something to think about.

What are car subscription services?

According to the online automotive resource Edmunds.com, drivers who utilize car subscription services do not actually own the cars they drive. So in that regard, subscription services are not different from leasing. Many people who lease vehicles like that leases, which typically last 36 months, do not require long-term commitments, meaning drivers won't be on the hook for the kinds of major repairs that are common as vehicles age. The same benefit applies to car subscription services.



Are car subscription services available everywhere?

Many auto manufacturers are still testing the concept of car subscription services, so they may not be available to drivers in all corners of the globe. Various programs are currently available in the United States and Europe, and Canada's first program was set to launch sometime in 2018.

How much do car subscription services cost?

Of course, cost is one of the biggest considerations drivers have when looking to buy or lease new vehicles. That likely won't change among drivers interested in subscription services. Edmunds notes that subscription services allow use of a car for an all-inclusive monthly fee, which usually

includes insurance, roadside assistance and maintenance. Monthly fees vary considerably based on the type of car drivers are interested in. For example, Book by Cadillac was launched in early 2017 and costs around \$1,800 per month for access to various Cadillac models, while Ford's Canvas subscription services may cost less than \$400 per month. (Editor's note: Fees may have changed since this story was written.)

Do I drive the same car all the time?

Many subscription services allow drivers to switch vehicles if ample notice is given ahead of time, though the number of times drivers can switch vehicles may be limited. This benefits people who may only need a fuel-efficient sedan to get to and from the office, but still want something larger for weekend road trips. Options vary, and switching vehicles may come with a fee, so drivers should inquire about the flexibility of a service before signing up.

Car subscription services are a relatively new option for drivers. More information is available at www.edmunds.com.

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Did you know?

The most popular electric car model of 2018 is the BAIC EC-Series. Manufactured in China, the BAIC EC-Series sold more than 15,000 units in January and February of 2018, unseating the Nissan Leaf as the most popular electric car across the globe. However, the Leaf remains popular, as electric car buyers made it the second most popular electric car model in the world in the first few months of 2018. The Leaf also remains the best-selling electric car in the world since it was first introduced in 2010, a function of its performance as well as its widespread availability. For electric car buyers with some money to spend, the third most popular model of 2018, the Tesla Model S, might do the job. Starting at around \$75,000, the Model S can accelerate from zero to 60 miles per hour in less than three seconds and its 100 kWh battery allows it to run 315 miles before needing to be recharged.



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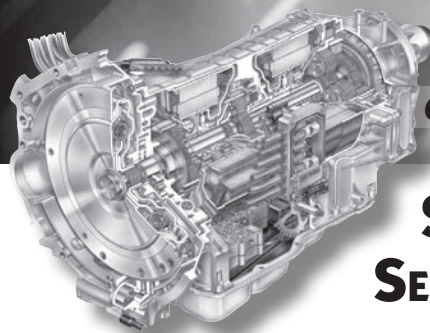
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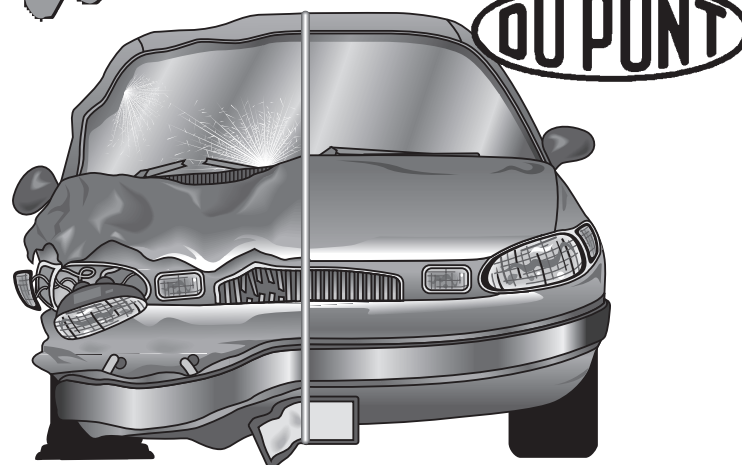
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How to prepare for an out-of-town breakdown

Road trips make for excellent get-aways. Whether you're embarking on a weekend excursion or a lengthy vacation, driving yourself to your destination is a great way to travel, especially for families looking to save money.

Though no one wants to think about the possibility of a vehicle breakdown while out of town, such things do happen. How prepared drivers are can go a long way toward determining how affected they and their passengers will be if this happens.

- Get a checkup before skipping town. It sounds simple, but many drivers may overlook the importance of vehicle checkups before departing on weekend getaways or longer trips. A full checkup (including an oil change if the recommended interval has passed or is approaching) can uncover any problems that might derail a trip.

- Examine your options in regard to emergency roadside assistance. Insurance providers typically offer emergency roadside assistance to policy holders for a nominal fee, and memberships in clubs

See **Breakdown** page 13B



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Did you know?

The United States and Canada have two of the lowest minimum age driving requirements in the world. Minimum driving age requirements vary by the state and province in the United States and Canada, respectively. However, in many areas of the United States, drivers can begin driving with a learner's permit around the age of 14 (drivers with learner's permits often must be accompanied by fully licensed drivers), while the minimum driving age in most Canadian provinces is 16 (it is 14 in Alberta). Throughout much of Africa, including in countries such as Egypt, Kenya and Morocco, the mini-

mum driving age is 18. The Central American countries of Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua also make young people wait until the age of 18 before they can get behind the wheel. Much of South America is the same, with only Argentina (17) and Chile (17 with parental approval) allowing young people to drive before they turn 18. Many countries in Asia, including China (18), India (18 for cars, 16 for gearless bikes under 50 cc) and Japan (18 for cars and motorcycles over 401 cc), also have higher minimum age driving requirements than the United States and Canada.

Breakdown • From page 8B

such as AAA also are inexpensive. That's especially true when drivers compare the cost of extra coverage or AAA membership to the potential price tag of a tow truck and out-of-town repairs. Drivers should note that out-of-town repairs may require costly overnight shipping of parts so travelers can get back on the road as quickly as possible. Roadside assistance offered through an insurance company or motor club may include tow trucks free of charge up to a certain number of miles, allowing travelers to get their cars back home without breaking the bank.

• Inspect tires, including your spare. Many a road trip has been derailed or thrown off schedule due to a flat tire or tires. Before departing, check the condition of your existing tires, including the spare, as well as the air pressure in each one. Firestone notes that many vehicle manufacturers recommend replacing tires at six years, regardless of tread wear. Tires that get heavy usage should be replaced even more frequently. To determine if tread wear is something to worry about, Firestone recommends the penny test, which involves placing a penny

head first into several tread grooves across the tire. If the top of Abraham Lincoln's head is always visible, then your tires are shallow and worn and need to be replaced. But if part of Lincoln's head is always covered, your tires can probably withstand the trip. Worn tire treads can make it hard for tires to safely navigate roads in inclement weather, so don't discount the importance of this simple step.

• Bring along some basic tools. Pack some basic tools, such as screw drivers, wrenches, pliers, a trolley jack, a battery charger, and, of course, duct tape, which may help you temporarily solve some issues on your own. This is especially important for drivers who intend to visit remote locations where mobile phone networks may be inaccessible and the nearest tow truck might be far away. hone your tire-changing skills before hitting the road and make sure tools are still capable of performing the kind of basic maintenance that might help your vehicle safely return to civilization.

Vehicle breakdowns happen, even while on vacation. Some advance preparation can help drivers avert out-of-town disasters.

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How seniors can safely stay behind the wheel

A greater sense of independence is often cited as the reason so many young people anxiously await the day they earn their drivers' licenses. But the connection between driving and independence is not lost on seniors, either.

Aging can take its toll on drivers, prompting such drivers' families to feel as if their loved ones' ability to safely operate motor vehicles has been compromised. However, many seniors can still safely operate motor vehicles, and those who do can take steps to ensure they're as safe as possible behind the wheel.

- Avoid driving on days when aches and pains are strong. Aches and pains are common side effects of aging, and seniors know that some days are better than others. Seniors' ability to control their vehicles may be compromised on days when stiffness, aches or pains seem particularly strong, so it's best to avoid driving during these times. Fatigue may set in on days when aches and pains require extra effort to perform relatively simple tasks, and drivers of all ages should avoid driving while tired.

- Don't skip medical checkups. Few seniors may look forward to their medical checkups, but visits to the doctor can reveal

issues that can help seniors be safer on the road. Schedule routine vision exams so eyeglass prescriptions are always up-to-date. In addition, seniors should discuss hearing screenings with their physicians so they can ensure they can always hear sirens and other motorists while on the road. Great strides have been made in regard to helping people with fading hearing hear better, and seniors would be wise to take advantage of such advancements, which include hearing aids that can be connected to smartphones.

- Familiarize yourself with medication side effects. Whether they do so temporarily or permanently, many seniors take medications, and every medication comes with side effects. When filling a new prescription, carefully read the dosage and description label to ensure that it's safe to drive while taking the medicine. Make note of how you feel when taking a new prescription, avoiding driving if the medication makes you feel fatigued or drowsy or affects your motor functions. If the side effects of a new prescription are making it difficult to safely operate a vehicle, discuss potential alternatives with your physician.

- Avoid driving in certain conditions. Driving in inclement weather, during rush

hour and at night makes many drivers uncomfortable, regardless of their age. But such conditions can be especially dangerous for aging drivers whose vision and reaction times might be fading. Seniors who avoid driving in harsh conditions and heavy traffic may be more comfortable behind the wheel, thereby reducing their risk of accident or injury.

Seniors need not give up their drivers'

licenses at the first signs of aging. But adjusting certain behaviors and exercising extra caution can help these men and women stay safe behind the wheel.

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How to approach buying a preowned vehicle

Vehicles are considerable investments. According to Kelley Blue Book, the estimated average transaction price for light vehicles in early 2018 was \$36,270.

Perhaps because of that price tag, many people in the market for cars and trucks shop for preowned vehicles, which statistics indicate are considerably less expensive than new automobiles. Edmunds.com notes that the average transaction price for a used vehicle purchased in the first quarter of 2018 was \$19,700.

Of course, preowned vehicles carry more risk than new cars. That said, car buyers in the market for preowned vehicles can take steps to protect themselves against the risks associated with buying used cars.

- Shop for certified preowned vehicles. Certified preowned vehicles, or CPOs, typically come with an inspection and extended warranty. That can ease the concerns of buyers worried about buying a lemon. Many CPOs are recently returned off-lease vehicles that tend to have low mileage. Lessees are obligated to return leased vehicles in good condition or suffer financial penalties, meaning most off-lease vehicles will be well-maintained.

- Recognize “certified” and “CPO” are

not the same thing. Edmunds.com notes that there’s sometimes a difference between vehicles that are characterized as “certified” and “certified preowned.” The CPO designation typically means the vehicle manufacturer stands behind the vehicle and its warranty. A vehicle described as “certified” many only be backed by the dealership itself. That’s an important distinction for buyers who may travel a lot or those who plan to move, as a manufacturer-backed warranty should allow them to take the vehicle to any of the manufacturer’s dealerships for repairs, regardless of where those dealerships are located. Drivers of vehicles that are only certified by a dealership may only be able to take their cars in for repairs at that particular dealership.

- Get a vehicle history report. Some sellers, whether it’s dealerships or private citizens, may provide vehicle history reports. But even if they don’t, the cost of such reports is negligible compared to the value of the information they provide. These reports indicate if a vehicle has been in any serious accidents and indicate mileage that can alert buyers to illegal odometer adjustments, and some may even indicate if maintenance was performed at manufacturer-recommended



intervals. If sellers are reluctant to provide reports or the VIN numbers of a vehicle necessary to order them, then walk away.

- Take a long test drive. A long test drive through various conditions (hills, curvy roads, highways, etc.) can give buyers a feel of how a preowned vehicle handles. Don’t

succumb to pressure to cut test drives short, and be wary of sellers who want to keep test drives to a minimum.

Preowned vehicles can be great investments, especially when buyers take steps to make the most informed decisions possible.

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