

Can you Spin a Web?

The Daily Nebraskan is looking for someone creative to be our new online editor for the remainder of the fall semester and the upcoming spring semester. Responsibilities would include maintaining the Daily Nebraskan's site and experimenting with additions and interactive resources. Our site is read on campus, in Lincoln and across the world.

This is a paid position that requires work every evening Sunday through Thursday. Experience with World Wide Web sites is mandatory, but journalism experience is not. Initial training will be provided. For more information, call (402) 472-1766, or send e-mail to plavigne@unlinfo.unl.edu. The site can be found at <http://www.unl.edu/DailyNeb>.

Pick up an application at the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union. Applications are due Oct. 23. The Daily Nebraskan does not discriminate in its hiring practices and abides by all university policies regarding the same.

Used cars not all lemons

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definitely a few things wrong with the car."

Patak said he had to buy a new starter and replace a couple of worn hoses. Later, the car was recalled by the manufacturer for the defective seat belts.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, more than 17 million people purchase used cars each year, at a price tag of over \$85 billion.

Some become owners of problem-free cars; others, like Patak, regret the purchase. Only those who do their homework can be sure they're buying a good car.

When choosing a used car, one must consider a lot more than price. Consumers must know how to protect themselves from being taken advantage of, said the Better Business Bureau.

Though there are several benefits of buying a used car — such as the lower price and a slower depreciation rate — the negative aspects can outweigh the good.

The bureau said possible downsides of buying used include:

- Mechanical or structural defects.
- Difficulty finding replacement parts.
- No warranty.
- Misrepresentation of the vehicle's condition.

"The most important thing for consumers to know is their rights and responsibilities as a consumer," said Scott Mecham, president of the Cornhusker Better Business Bureau.

Mecham said that once a contract is signed and the car is driven off the lot, any problems are generally the consumer's concern. Any verbal agreements between the consumer and dealer must be written into the contract.

The Better Business Bureau and the state attorney general's office receive several complaints from customers each week after purchases already have been made.

"Many people believe that the three-day right-to-cancel law applies to car purchases," said Dan Parsons, special assistant to the Nebraska attorney general. The law applies only to door-to-door merchandise sales.

Parsons said many of the complaints are from customers who had misconceptions that they could return their car or back out of a contract.

State of trust

According to a Better Business Bureau Web page on buying used cars, the best place to look for a used car is a new car dealer that sells used vehicles.

New car dealers are preferred because they generally sell the best of the cars they acquire through trade-ins. Purchases are more likely to include a limited warranty, and necessary repairs are more likely to be made in the dealer's service department.

But Dean Hillhouse, owner of Downtown Auto, 1649 O St., disagreed.

Hillhouse said the best place to purchase a used car is from someone who is accredited by business organizations such as the Better Business Bureau and the National Board of Commerce.

"Those are the people that you can trust," said Hillhouse, a former

Check them out ...

Consumers can find a wealth of information about used car buying tips, prices, dealer backgrounds and previous owners.

By phone:

Cornhusker Better Business Bureau, 436-2345
 Attorney General Don Stenberg's Office, 471-2682
 Dealer's Licensing Board, 471-2148

On the Web:

The Better Business Bureau buying guide: <http://www.bbb.org/library/used-car.html>
 Kelley Blue Book: <http://www.kbb.com/>
 CARveat Emptor: <http://www.well.com/user/kr2/index.html>

president of the Independent Used Car Dealer's Association.

Customers are treated better by independent used car dealers than by large new car sellers, Hillhouse said.

"Many older people may remember the mom-and-pop grocery stores and the small filling stations of the past," Hillhouse said. "But they've disappeared. Now all we have are mega-stores. Those places don't treat you the same as family oriented small businesses do."

Do the homework

Mecham said consumers should look up prospective cars in an automobile price guide, such as the monthly Kelley Blue Book. Such guides are available at libraries, bookstores, insurance agencies and banks.

Consumers also can contact the National Traffic Safety Administration to find out if the model has ever been recalled for safety defects.

It is also suggested that one obtain the telephone number of the previous owner, who may be open to providing important information about the vehicle, perhaps information unknown to the dealer.

But one can do more than just check the history of the vehicle. It is also possible to check out the history of the dealer.

Mecham said the Better Business Bureau provides reliability reports free of charge to consumers. If a prospective dealer has an unsatisfactory record, the bureau can tell a consumer why and what types of complaints the business has on record.

Calls also can be made to the Dealer Licensing Board to see if a dealer's license has ever been suspended for any reason. Anyone who sells more than six cars in a year must be licensed by the board.

According to a Better Business Bureau brochure, some dealers are good at hiding a car's problems.

A shiny new paint job and steam-cleaned engine does not mean the car is in good condition. Though a consumer can try to do a thorough job of checking out the quality of the car, the Better Business Bureau recommends that the consumer take the car to a mechanic for a pre-purchase inspection.

"It costs a little money to have the car checked out," Mecham said. "But if they do find a problem, it can

According to a Better Business Bureau brochure, a consumer can look for several possible car problems while on the lot.

1. Check for rust at the bottoms of fenders, around lights and bumpers, and under the doors. Blisters under the paint indicate future rust.
2. Look carefully for paint that doesn't match, gritty surfaces and over-spray on the chrome — all signs that the car has been painted to mask problems.
3. Any cracks, heat-discolored areas, loose bumpers or loose-fitting doors and windows are signs that the car may have been involved in a collision.
4. Uneven wear on the front tires can indicate bad alignment or front suspension damage.
5. Look for leaks around hoses and valves, on the underside of the engine, as well as under the car.
6. Oil that is whitish, or with white bubbles, can be a sign of major mechanical problems. Feel around the inside of the tailpipe. Black, gummy soot can indicate worn rings or bad valves.
7. While driving the car, listen for unusual sounds, vibrations or odors.
8. Make several starts and stops. The car should accelerate without hesitation and should brake without vibrating or pulling to one side.
9. Turn at various speeds. The power steering (if equipped) should feel smooth, with little squealing or swaying. If the steering seems stiff, it could mean that the car has front-end problems.
10. Have a friend or family member stand behind the vehicle while you decelerate from 45 to 15 mph, then step hard on the gas. Blue smoke indicates worn rings or valves while white smoke can mean the car has a cracked block.

save you a lot more money in the long run."

Most of these inspections cost between \$30 and \$40 and can be used as a bargaining tool when negotiating the price with the dealer, if any problems are found.

Whoops

If customers discover problems after purchasing a vehicle, they should consult the dealer first.

Mecham said dealers want to keep their customers satisfied, but if the dealer refuses to correct the problem, the customer can contact the Better Business Bureau and file a complaint.

The bureau can act as a middleman between customers and dealers to reach an agreement if complaints are valid, Mecham said. But the bureau will tell the consumers if they do not have a valid complaint.

Consumers can also file complaints with the dealer licensing board and the attorney general's office.

Further information on buying a used car is available at the attorney general's office in the Capitol building and at the Cornhusker Better Business Bureau, 3633 O St.

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Nebraska spared from restrictions

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from automobiles and other smaller sources.

Wood said air pollution from some nitrogen oxides can lead to the development of "West Coast-style

smog." However, he said, other nitrogen oxides formed in the atmosphere do not contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone, a major contributor to the problem of smog.

Iowa, Kansas and South Dakota also will not have to meet the new

regulations. Missouri is one of the 22 states that will be subject to the new standards.

Wood estimated the state of Nebraska will save \$50 million to \$70 million in costs that would have been needed to meet the restrictions.