

SMART BUYING

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SMART BUYING!

Buy from a licensed Wisconsin Car Dealer and you're protected by Wisconsin's Motor Vehicle Trade Practice Law. Dealers follow the law when they advertise, display and sell vehicles. You won't get the same protection if you buy from a private party.

Expect these advantages when you buy from a licensed dealer:

- ▶ Truthful advertising
- ▶ Accurate window labels
- ▶ Warranty information

Truthful advertising

Expect ads to say what they mean and mean what they say. An advertised price will include all charges you'll pay for a car (excluding tax, title, registration and service fees). If an ad promises you a set price for your trade, you'll get that price for a trade of any age, condition or mileage. You don't have to buy anything to get a gift offered "free" in an advertisement.

Accurate window labels

▶ Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price Label (MSRP)

You'll find the "MSRP" label on the window of any new, executive, or demonstrator car offered for sale. It lists the following:

- ✓ Manufacturer's base price
- ✓ Standard equipment and manufacturer's optional equipment with prices
- ✓ Freight charge
- ✓ Suggested retail price

Cars may sell for more or less than the Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price.

▶ Wisconsin Buyers Guide

Used cars display the Wisconsin Buyers Guide which gives the following information:

- ✓ How a vehicle was used (private use, business use, lease use, rental, etc.)
- ✓ Price
- ✓ Optional service fee
- ✓ Title brands (permanent brands currently on the title or will be on the next title)
- ✓ Make, year, model, identification number, engine size and transmission type
- ✓ Sold with remaining manufacturer's warranty, a dealer warranty, or "As Is"
- ✓ Description of items dealer is required to inspect
- ✓ Condition of the vehicle and its safety equipment, with defects explained

Dealers complete the Buyers Guide based on a visual inspection and test drive. They must disclose any noticeable defects. However, they aren't required to take vehicles apart to check them.

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Vehicle history reports

If the dealer doesn't provide one, consider investing in a vehicle history report. There are several vendors who supply these reports online for a small fee, and the information supplied can be invaluable. One report that helps protect consumers from vehicle fraud and safety issues is provided by the National Motor Vehicle Title Information System. For more information, visit www.vehiclehistory.gov.

Warranty information

▶ New car warranty

All new cars carry a warranty, usually at least 12 months and/or 12,000 miles. Tires, battery, and dealer installed options may have separate warranties that differ in time and mileage. Read any warranties to find out what is covered and for how long, who will honor the warranty, and what you have to do to keep it in effect.

▶ Wisconsin's new car lemon law

The lemon law protects you when you buy or lease new vehicles. It entitles you to a refund or replacement vehicle if, in the first year under warranty, your vehicle has a serious problem the dealer doesn't repair in four tries, or if it's out of service due to defects for a total of 30 days or more. Save your repair orders.

▶ Used car warranty

Read the Wisconsin Buyers Guide window label to find out if a used car has any dealer warranty or remaining manufacturer's new car warranty. Ask if any remaining manufacturer's warranty will be transferred and who will pay any transfer fee. The dealer will show you a separate warranty document for any warranty listed on the label.

▶ "As Is"

If you buy a car with no dealer warranty, "As Is" will be marked on the window sticker. "As Is" means the dealer is not responsible for repairs the car needs later, even if the car comes with a manufacturer warranty.

Tips for smart buying

- ▶ Read windows labels about price and condition. Read the title, odometer statement and any warranties.
- ▶ Test drive the vehicle. The dealer will ask to see your driver license and may have you take a salesperson along.
- ▶ Ask the vehicle's former owner about its condition, mileage and use. The salesperson will give you the name and address if you ask.
- ▶ Have your own expert check out the vehicle if the dealer allows.
- ▶ Protect yourself and the next owner. Tell the true miles and use of your trade-in.
- ▶ Get promises in writing on the contract.
- ▶ Sign only when you're ready to buy. You may pay a penalty for cancelling the contract.
- ▶ Keep copies of all documents and anything else you sign.
- ▶ Contact the dealership first if you have a problem after the sale.
- ▶ If you are unable to resolve the problem, contact the WisDOT Dealer and Agent Section.



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Binding contract

▶ You sign, you buy

Dealers use the Motor Vehicle Contract form when selling cars. Read and understand the contract before you sign. Once you and the dealer sign the offer, it becomes a binding contract. The dealer can't raise the price or sell the car to anyone else. You can't cancel the contract without a penalty.

The contract should include the following information about your purchase:

- ✓ Whether you're buying the car with a warranty or "As Is."
- ✓ Date your vehicle will be delivered.
- ✓ Other conditions of the sale. Get all promises in writing on the contract.

▶ No three-day right to cancel

Many consumers mistakenly believe they have three days to cancel the purchase contract. They do not. The three day "cooling off" period only applies to sales the dealer makes away from the dealership.

▶ Trade-in

Get the price for your trade-in written on the purchase contract. The price won't change unless you put on more miles than agreed to in the contract, remove parts, or damage

the car before you trade it in. Protect yourself and the next owner by giving accurate information about your trade-in's mileage and condition, and how it is used.

▶ Buying "upside-down"

It's possible that you could owe more on your trade-in than it's worth. That's called "negative equity" or being "upside-down" on your trade. The amount you owe may be added to your new loan.

▶ License Plates

You must display a license plate on all autos and light trucks. Your dealer will provide you with a temporary plate good for 90 days if you do not have a plate to transfer.

Some dealers offer title and registration services that allow them to give you plates and stickers right away. If you choose this option you will receive your title sooner than if your dealer mails your application. There is a fee for this service.

▶ Record of the sale

Your dealer will give you the following documents or copies as soon as you sign them.

Save them all:

- ✓ Motor Vehicle Purchase Contract
- ✓ Odometer statement from the dealer
- ✓ Window labels
- ✓ Any warranty or service agreement
- ✓ Any finance contract
- ✓ Anything else you sign

Speakers available

Call the WisDOT Dealer and Agent Section at (608) 266-1425 to reserve a speaker for your class or meeting.

Topics include: smart car buying, lemon law, odometer tampering.

It's free, but please allow 4 weeks notice.

For more information

Wisconsin Department of Transportation
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