

A private party is the registered owner of a used car who personally owns the car you may be interested in buying. The process is different from buying a used car from a car dealer. To protect yourself and make sure all goes smoothly, consider the following:



CHECK THE VEHICLE'S HISTORY

The National Motor Vehicle and Title Information System and also sites like carfax.com can tell you if the vehicle has been in an accident. Have the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) ready. The VIN is visible on the dash at the driver's side windshield and on the car's proof of registration.



INSPECT THE VEHICLE THOROUGHLY

Remember, you are solely responsible for checking out the car. Once you give the seller money, there is no warranty and your recourse is limited. If the seller is reluctant to allow you to have a mechanic of your choice do a thorough inspection, they may have something to hide.



ASK THE SELLER TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS

1) Bill of sale signed by the seller and you with these details:

- Date of sale
- Purchase price
- Seller and buyer's full names and addresses
- Vehicle year, make, model, identification number and mileage
- Acknowledgement of any liens on the vehicle

2) The title, also commonly known as the "pink slip"

Actually, it's not pink anymore. This is the certificate of ownership, and the seller must provide it. If they don't have it, they can request a duplicate from the DMV for a fee. If the vehicle is or was financed, line two of the title will also require a releasing signature. If the vehicle is not being purchased from the owner whose name appears on the title, you will need a bill of sale from each in-between buyer. Signatures may need to be notarized.

3) Current registration and smog certification



FILE REQUIRED FORMS WITH THE DMV AND PAY FEES DUE

As the buyer, you will need to file the following documents within ten days to ensure your purchase is properly recorded and avoid DMV penalties.

- Properly endorsed title, also known as a "pink slip".
- File an online Notice of Transfer within ten days of purchase.
- Determine if a Smog Certificate or transfer fee is required. It may not be required if the vehicle is less than four years old. Other conditions apply.

For more information about buying from a private party, visit the California DMV page.

Information provided as a courtesy and is not legal advice. MCFCU is not responsible for omissions or inaccuracies.