

Tips for buying a car

This infosheet has tips if you are buying a car (or other vehicle) privately or from a licensed dealer, to avoid potential problems after you buy.

Do the sums! Check you can afford the car

If you are taking out a loan, check you can meet the repayments.

See a [financial counsellor](#) if you are not sure.

Get your car insured before you drive it away!

You should make sure your car is insured before you drive it home. [The MoneySmart website](#) has information to help you compare the cost and understand what is (and is not) covered by different policies.

Check the car works before you buy!

When you buy from a private seller, for example, on Gumtree or Marketplace, you are purchasing at your own risk as you are not protected by the Australian Consumer Law (ACL) consumer guarantees or any statutory warranty.

Whether you are buying from a licensed dealer, at auction or privately, it is recommended that you get the car independently checked out by a qualified mechanic before you buy. This will help identify any mechanical defects that may cause problems for you later.

You can ask a seller if there is any warranty remaining on the car from its original sale and, if so, you should arrange to have that warranty transferred to you.

If you are buying a new car

The Consumer Protection WA website has information on things you need to take into account including arranging finance, your obligations under a contract, warranties, and insurance at this link: <https://www.consumerprotection.wa.gov.au/buying-new-car>.

If you are buying a used car

From a licensed dealer

You will sign a contract which is a legally binding document so make sure you want to buy the car. If you are buying a used car from a licensed dealer, you will have some protections under ACL. For more information, including on consumer protections and cancelling a contract, go to the [Consumer Protection WA website](#).

At an auction

If you are buying at an auction, you will usually enter into a contract if you are the highest bidder. You will have some consumer guarantees. For more information go to the [Consumer Protection WA website](#).

If you are buying a used car privately

Check the car is registered before you buy

You can use the registration plate details to run two checks on the Department of Transport website:

1. The car's [registration](#) – Make sure the make, model and year match the car you were looking at, and that the registration is up-to-date; and

2. check for outstanding payments using the [Account Lookup](#).

There is a cheap way to do this. You can do a \$2 Personal Property Securities Register (PPSR) search. You will need the vehicle identification number (VIN). You can do the [PPSR search online](#) or by calling 1300 007 777. Be careful you are on the authorised Australian Financial Security Authority (AFSA) PPSR website to avoid being charged more.

Check the person selling is authorised to sell the car

It is important to check who the seller is before you buy.

A car can be licensed in one person's name but owned by another person. Check the person selling is authorised to sell the car and that the necessary transfer document will be lodged with the Department of Transport by the seller.

If there is a dispute about the car's ownership after you buy it, you should get legal advice.

The seller should complete a Notification of Change of Ownership (MR9) form and give you, the purchaser, the purchaser's copy (red) and the vehicle licence papers.

You as the buyer also must notify the Department of Transport (DoT) within 14 days of purchasing the car. In some cases, you can transfer a vehicle licence online. Otherwise, you can do it by mail or in person.

Check the car licence has not been suspended

You can use [DoTDirect](#) to find out if a car licence has been suspended.

If you have bought a vehicle with a suspended licence, email a description of the purchase details, a copy of the transfer paperwork and proof of your purchase to ferwarrants@justice.wa.gov.au (link sends email). If the Fines Enforcement Registry approve, it will arrange for the suspension to be lifted so the transfer may be possible.

Checklist

For other things to check before buying a car, see Consumer Protection's used car buyer's checklist:

<https://www.consumerprotection.wa.gov.au/publications/buying-car-buyers-checklist>

Buying a car for a family member

If you buy a car for a family member, you need to think about whether you want to give it to them as a gift or still retain ownership of it and lend it to them to drive.

If the family member registers the car in their name but you do not intend it as a gift, you should sign and date a written document that it is not intended to be a gift and that you are lending it to that family member to drive and under what (if any) conditions.

If you are pressured into buying a car for someone else

Seek legal advice before you agree to do this.


Tell the person selling the car you don't want to buy it until you have had a chance to get legal advice.


If you are an older person being pressured by an adult child to purchase a car for them, our [Elder Rights WA](#) service may be able to help you.

Where can I get more information?

- Contact Legal Aid WA Infoline or Legal Yarn (for First Nations callers) for information and referral.
- Go to the Legal Aid WA My Car website: <http://mycar.legalaid.wa.gov.au/>.
- The Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, Consumer Protection website has information on buying a car: <https://www.consumerprotection.wa.gov.au/buying-car>.

LEGAL AID WA CONTACTS

 **Infoline:** 1300 650 579

 **Legal Yarn:** 1800 319 803 (for First Nations callers)

 **Website/InfoChat:** www.legalaid.wa.gov.au

Interpreting and relay services to help you contact us:



Translating & Interpreting Service: 131 450

National Relay Service: 133 677

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32 St Georges Terrace,
PERTH WA 6000
1300 650 579
(08) 9261 6222

Goldfields Office

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KALGOORLIE WA 6530
(08) 9025 1300

Midwest & Gascoyne Office

Unit 8, The Boardwalk,
273 Foreshore Drive,
GERALDTON WA 6530
(08) 9921 0200

East Kimberley Office

98 Konkerberry Drive,
KUNUNURRA WA 6743
(08) 9166 5800

West Kimberley Office

Upper Lvl, Woody's Arcade,
15 – 17 Dampier Terrace,
BROOME WA 6725
(08) 9195 5888

Southwest Office

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61 Victoria Street,
BUNBURY WA 6230
(08) 9721 2277

Great Southern Office

Unit 3, 43 – 47 Duke Street,
ALBANY WA 6330
(08) 9892 9700

Pilbara Office

28 Throssell Road
SOUTH HEDLAND WA 6722
(08) 9172 3733

Indian Ocean Office

Administration Building,
20 Jalan Pantai,
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