

Used Cars vs. Certified Pre-Owned Cars



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When it comes time to buy, you'll need to decide whether you should buy new, used, or certified pre-owned (CPO).

You may have heard talk of CPO cars before. While some drivers may think this term is interchangeable with a used car, it isn't at all. There are many differences between a certified pre-owned and a used car. To make an informed purchase, you'll have to understand those differences, which we'll take a closer look at in this eBook.

What Is a Certified Pre-Owned Vehicle?

To put it simply, a certified pre-owned car is a used car that's undergone a rigorous process of inspection and refurbishment. The goal here is to return the car to a like-new state, which also means a new CPO warranty.

To earn this coveted title, the car must pass an inspection of anywhere from 150 to 174 points. During this time, mechanics will examine:

- The exterior, ensuring there's no cosmetic or performance damage.
- The interior, making sure that all gadgets and features work, and that the trim is in good condition.
- The powertrain, determining that everything under the hood is running perfectly.

The technicians will have a major checklist to consult. Anything that doesn't match their standards will either be repaired or entirely replaced with genuine parts. This way, by the time the car makes it to the lot, it'll run and look like it's fresh from the factory.

Benefits of Buying Certified Pre-Owned

One of the advantages of buying a CPO vehicle is added peace of mind. Whether you purchase a used or certified pre-owned automobile from a dealership, you're sure to get a quality ride no matter what. With a CPO car, though, you'll have the extra assurance of an extensive inspection and warranty.

In addition to regular coverage, this warranty may include roadside assistance or pre-paid maintenance. Plus, you'll also get the protection of any new car warranty that may still be in effect.

CPO vehicles also have age and mileage restrictions in order to earn certification. So, buying CPO means you'll get a more recent model with low miles on it. For those reasons, the car should have more longevity than some non-CPO vehicles which may be older with more miles.

Hammer Out the Details with Your Dealer

You should take the time to sit down with a sales representative at the dealership to figure out what type of CPO your vehicle is. Certified pre-owned could mean either manufacturer-certified or dealership-certified.

Often times, manufacturer-certified cars have additional safety checks and inspection steps that make their processes slightly more rigorous. If you find out that the vehicle you're interested in is dealership-certified, ask your dealer about the details of the certification process. Having this information will help you feel more comfortable about the CPO-buying process.



What Differences Will You Find in a Non-Certified Used Car?

As you can imagine, a used car hasn't received the same attention that its CPO counterpart may have. However, dealerships offer an attention-to-detail with their used vehicle selection that's difficult to find with private sellers.

That's why there are plenty of benefits to buying a standard used car from a dealership, as well.

You can buy just about anywhere. Virtually all dealerships offer used vehicles in their inventory, but not all dealerships have CPO cars for sale. Be sure to check with the dealership first and ask if the certification comes from the dealership or the manufacturer.

However, if you choose to purchase your used automobile from a private seller, it won't be certified and may not have any warranty.

You can save a bit more money. A used car can be cheaper than a certified pre-owned one with the same specs. As such, dealerships come equipped with an array of used vehicle options with competitive prices.

Incentive options. At many dealerships, you'll discover an array of specials on their used car selection. This can help make it easier to get behind the wheel of a great used car.



Always Try Before You Buy

One of the most exciting aspects of searching for a used or certified pre-owned car is the test drive! By taking your used automobile for a spin, you'll ensure that the car comes equipped with the gadgets or technologies you've wanted.

On top of that, test driving your car and reviewing the vehicle's history allows you to hone in on smaller details and spot anything that may have gone unnoticed. In addition, these steps help you gather important information about your vehicle and get you more familiar with the way it drives.

Get the Vehicle History Reports

There are many factors that can alter a car's longevity. Has it received all the required maintenance? Have any parts been replaced? Has it been in any accidents? The answers to all these questions will be in the vehicle history reports.

Often, a history report will be offered with a CPO car as part of the deal. However, if it's not already available, you can always request one online.

There are plenty of websites where you can find vehicle history reports, but CARFAX® may be the most well-known. Pick one up before you buy.





Test Drive the Car

Above all else, you need to know what it feels like to drive the car. Here's a brief list of the steps you should follow during your test drive...

Examine the exterior and interior for any cosmetic flaws. Dents, scratches, or rust may not be too much of a bother now, but they could cost you later.

Pop the hood. You can tell quite a bit just from a visual scan. Look under the hood to make sure all hoses, caps, and easily recognizable components are in place.

Settle into the driver's seat. Make sure you have enough headroom and legroom, and that all the important gadgets and features are easily within reach.

Make sure your ride is varied. Test the car on both highways and city roads. Drive over a bump or two to get a feel for the suspension. Take some sharp turns. Pump the brakes to make sure they're responsive and healthy.

Ask questions! One of the major benefits of choosing to buy your used car from a dealership is that you're free to ask any questions you like. With the expertise of sales professionals, you can learn more about how to care for your used car in the future or get some advice on the best financing option.

Dealerships are there to help, and they know what they're talking about. Ask them as many questions as you can think of.

Keep Your Car Maintained

The key to ensuring that your used vehicle lasts for a lifetime is to keep up with regular maintenance and inspections.

Once you're ready to buy your used or CPO vehicle, ask your representative about their in-house repair center. With the assistance of dealership service professionals, you can gather more information on how to keep your car running smoothly for a lifetime.

Which Option Is Right for You?

Contrary to popular belief, there are many differences between used and CPO vehicles. Make sure you're aware of them all before purchasing your next car.

Of course, if you want a little extra advice, you should contact your local dealership. Learn which used and CPO vehicles they currently have in stock before inquiring about any special deals or incentives.

