

# FAQs on Buying a Used/Second hand Car

**Does the RSA have any advice on buying a used car?** Yes. Never, ever, buy a used car without at least:

- a) Getting an qualified mechanic to independently inspect the vehicle, and
- b) Carrying out a comprehensive history check through official vehicle record holders

**Where can I get a list of Qualified Mechanics or Reputable Motor Engineers?** The Society of the Irish Motor Industry (SIMI) has a list of approved garages on [www.simi.ie](http://www.simi.ie). Alternatively, [The Engineer's Association of Ireland](http://The Engineer's Association of Ireland) has a list of registered mechanical Engineers.

**Is it safe to buy a used vehicle once it has a valid NCT?** No. The NCT is a basic safety check on a vehicle every year or two years (depending on the age of the vehicle). Yet cars need to be serviced roughly every 6 months. The NCT doesn't dismantle a vehicle so only parts that can be seen and are accessible can be inspected as part of the test. Also there is no guarantee that the vehicle hasn't been crashed or that components haven't become excessively worn since its last test. There is also the risk that an NCT cert is fake.

**Where can I check if the NCT Cert is fake?** You can check whether an NCT cert is fake by visiting [www.ncts.ie](http://www.ncts.ie) and entering the vehicle registration number. This is free and will show the expiry date of the last NCT cert issued for that vehicle.

**Is it enough to just do a history check on a used vehicle?** While a history check may tell you if a vehicle has ever been written off, clocked or even stolen, it will not tell you whether the tyres on the vehicle are safe or whether certain components are just about to fail. What may seem like a bargain at the time, can end up costing you more in the long term with expensive replacement parts and labour. A qualified mechanic should be able to identify worn or dangerous parts. Also check the vehicle's service history for regular maintenance.

**What is a Written Off Vehicle?** Please view our separate FAQ note on [Written Off Vehicles](#)

**What is a Clocked Vehicle?** Please view our separate FAQ note on [Clocked Vehicles](#)

**How can I find out if a used car has ever been written off or clocked?** You can find out if a vehicle has been clocked or written off by carrying out a comprehensive history check through official vehicle record holders (e.g. [Motorcheck](#), [Cartell](#), [Carhistorycheck](#) etc.).

**Is it safe to buy an imported vehicle?** The RSA has received a large number of complaints relating to imported vehicles which turned out to be written off or clocked. Never buy a used imported vehicle without doing a comprehensive history check and get a qualified mechanic to independently inspect the vehicle. Countries such as Australia, USA, Canada etc. also offer car history information so make sure you check the vehicles history on the relevant country of origin site.

**I'm buying a used car from a garage/trader. Do I still need to get it independently checked?** The RSA still recommends getting a car independently checked. Always get a warranty for the car and ask the garage to write the current odometer reading on the receipt. If the dealer is not willing to offer this, consider walking away from the sale.

**What are my rights when buying a used car?** If you buy a used car from a garage/dealer you have a certain level of protection under consumer legislation if things go wrong. However if you buy private you have very little, if any, rights and therefore could end up losing all your money. For more detailed information on your consumer rights when buying a used car please visit the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) website [here](#)

**Where can I find out the safety rating for a vehicle?** You can find a vehicle's original NCAP rating [here](#). Older cars normally don't have the same [safety rating](#) or [safety features](#) that would offer extra crash prevention or occupant protection. For example; airbags, anti-lock braking systems, electronic stability control etc.