



How to Pick Out a

*Gus suggests ways to identify disguised
and how to estimate mileage*

Dear Bill:

You asked me about buying a used car. If I were doing it, I would buy only from a dealer with a good reputation. I would also inspect the car very carefully. I wish I could help you do this. But since I can't, I am attaching to this letter a few notes about things to look for.

If you go to a used-car lot, remember that many established dealers wholesale some used cars to the lots because it would cost too much to recondition them for sale with a guarantee. If a lot operator offers a guarantee, check it carefully. Also, ask him where the shop is that would make good any repairs for him.

There are two types of second-hand cars that you'd be smart to avoid - cars that have been in major crack-ups and former taxis. The wrecked car may look like new, but still have serious mechanical faults. The ex-taxi, even though a recent model, may have the life hacked out of it.

Don't trust the salesman or speedometer on mileage. Instead - as a rough estimate - multiply the car's age by 10,000. That's the average distance the average car goes a year. Don't let the car's looks influence you too much. Many shops buy used-car reconditioning kits that make old cars look like a million bucks. I heard of one the other day that even includes something to make a car smell new.

Don't just drive the car around the block. If you can, give it a real road test of 50 miles or so, including all kinds of road - level, rough, smooth, and some good hills. In New York, salesmen used to take prospects for a ride under the elevated tracks. The noise helped many a sale.

Unless you know the dealer, watch out for tricks! An over-full crankcase and extra heavy oil will often quiet a noisy engine. So pull out the dip stick and measure the oil