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Purchasing a used car: Take precautions

Purchasing used cars is still popular in 2025. However, whether it is your dream car or a bargain banger, all sorts of things can go wrong when buying second hand. It is not uncommon to come across dazzlers harboring hidden defects, a lot of subsequent repairs, undisclosed damage from accidents, or expensive electronic faults. DEKRA's experts advise that it is all the more important to take precautions.

Damage appraisal: Transferring a proven approach to bicycles

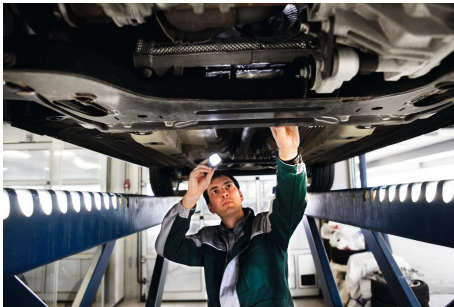
What do you do if you have had an accident with your pedelec? There is a clearly defined procedure for cars: A neutral expert assesses the damage and prepares a damage appraisal that is then used by insurers to settle your claim. This proven approach is now also being applied to bicycles.

Start of the new biking season: "Pay active attention to others"

The new biking season again promises plenty of fun with tours to attractive sights and meets with other bike enthusiasts, many of whom see this as the epitome of freedom. DEKRA's motorcycle experts have a range of tips to ensure a successful start after the cold winter.

Further topics:

- When you find mold: Do not delay
- Used motorbikes: Checklist for buyers
- Worn windshield wipers: Defect in German statutory inspections



*Purchasing a used car: An expert
check provides certainty*

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Be careful when purchasing a used car

Take precautions before signing any contract

Purchasing used cars is still popular in 2025 and sales figures rose again at the start of the year. However, whether it is your dream car or a bargain banger, all sorts of things can go wrong when buying second hand. It is not uncommon to come across dazzlers harboring hidden defects, a lot of subsequent repairs, undisclosed damage from accidents, or expensive electronic faults. "It's all the more important to take precautions before signing any purchase contract," says Ronald Hufnagel, a used car specialist at DEKRA. He recommends the following:

Expert When you go to look at a car, take an expert with you to examine the vehicle critically – four eyes always see more than two. Focus especially on the model's known weak points. You can find out what these are by checking independent test reports. And do not forget a test drive.

History Used cars are on average 6.7 years old when they are sold. In the case of private sales, they may be more than 9 years old. A lot can have happened in this time. That is why you should always check the vehicle's history carefully: its origin, the number of previous owners, the service record, and workshop invoices. Was the vehicle serviced regularly? Has the timing belt been replaced? Is the mileage plausible? If you are in any doubt, it may make sense to perform an electronics system check.

Used car check A recent statutory inspection is one of the basic requirements. Greater certainty is provided by a professional used car check conducted by an independent expert. DEKRA tests more than 80 aspects of a used car. If it passes the technology, bodywork, and electronics tests, it receives a test label.

Warranty The used car warranties provided by many car dealers offer an additional degree of certainty, not least because dealers are also required to provide statutory warranties. In the case of private sales, the principle of "sold as seen" generally applies. A detailed purchase contract is important in both cases.

Written contract You should never rely on oral assurances; always insist on a written contract. Check the car's identity (vehicle identification number), note the mileage and equipment, and obtain written confirmation that the car is accident-free. If the vehicle is handed over at a later date, you should check that the agreed equipment is present. (DEKRA Info)



*Damage appraisal for bicycles:
The basis for settling claims*

Damage appraisal for high-priced bicycles

Transferring a proven approach to bicycles

What do you do if you have had an accident with your pedelec? There is a clearly defined procedure for cars: A neutral expert assesses the damage and prepares a damage appraisal that is then used by insurers to settle your claim. This proven approach is now also being applied to bicycles. "The boom in recent years has really shaken up the bicycle market, with an ever-growing number of high-priced two-wheeled vehicles on our roads. These can be anything from pedelecs to cargo bikes, racing bikes and mountain bikes for ambitious amateurs, and innovative professional bikes made from high-end materials," says Marcel Ott, Head of Damage Appraisal at independent expert organization, DEKRA.

Many modern bicycles are in an entirely different price category to the pushbikes of earlier decades. In 2023, according to German Bicycle Industry (ZIV), the price of an average pedelec was already 2,950 euros. "If a bike like this gets damaged, a lot of money is involved. As a result, we've received an increasing number of requests for damage appraisals for bicycles. Our qualified technicians and engineers were able to transfer our proven concept for cars to bicycles Germany-wide," reports the damage appraisal specialist.

"When it comes to high-priced bicycles, we often find complex damage that is difficult to assess with the naked eye and without the necessary expertise," explains Ott. "Carbon frames are one example. Depending on the accident, hidden cracks may occur that can only be identified using technical processes, but which can make the difference between a relatively inexpensive repair and a write-off." DEKRA's materials laboratory uses state-of-the-art processes such as thermal imaging, X-rays, and computer tomography for its analysis.

The damage appraisal for a bicycle – like the one for a car – contains a detailed description of the damage and photographs, as well as information about plausibility, previous damage, and general condition. Other information included in the appraisal is the age of the vehicle, mileage, and special accessories. If necessary, information about the repair may also be provided. For example, in the event of damage to the bottom bracket, the manufacturer's guidance must be observed. As most of the bicycle's sensors are in this area, consequential damage cannot be ruled out. (DEKRA Info)

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*New enjoyment in the new season:
Pay active attention to others from
the start*

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Start of the new biking season

“Pay active attention to others”

The new biking season again promises plenty of fun with tours to attractive sights and meets with other bike enthusiasts, many of whom see this as the epitome of freedom. To ensure a smooth start to the season after the cold winter, DEKRA's motorcycle experts have put together a number of tips.

Practice makes perfect Following the winter break, many bikers are not as familiar with their vehicles as they were at the end of the previous season. Bikes and cars are completely different when it comes to balance, coordination, acceleration, and speed. That is why it makes sense to do a few practice runs at the start of the season. Off-road training sites are the ideal location to practice braking and riding slaloms and curves, regaining a feeling for the bike before heading for the open road.

Pay active attention to others At the start of the season, bikers should apply the same procedure as every year. Car drivers and bikers need to get used to each other again. “The priority for both is to think when they're on the road and pay active attention to others,” says Achim Kuppinger, a DEKRA motorcycle expert. Approaching junctions and overtaking are particularly hazardous situations.

Slippery road surfaces Bikers need to be careful when it comes to the grip on road surfaces, which may have changed since the previous fall. In spring, the risk of skidding is increased by gravel on the road, frost damage, moisture, or just poor road conditions.

Layering It can still get quite cold in spring and the layering principle is a proven defense for bikers – several layers of clothing that can be put on or removed as needed. “If a rider doesn't feel comfortable on their motorbike, this may affect their concentration,” says Kuppinger. The suitability of equipment – leathers, protectors, helmet, visor, boots, and rain protection – should always be checked before the first outing.

Tech check Of course, the bike itself also deserves a thorough check covering everything from the engine to accessories. A checklist can be downloaded at www.dekra.de/de/tipps-fuer-biker/. (DEKRA Info)



*Checking for mold in the home: A
hazard for the respiratory system*

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Do not delay if you find mold

“Permanently high humidity”

DEKRA's building experts recommend checking rooms now for mold. “You should not delay dealing with any mold you find. Otherwise, there is a risk that the harmful spores can spread uncontrolled and cause health issues,” warn the experts.

Mold in the home is not only unsightly, but also a hazard to human health. The spores often irritate the skin and eyes, or cause coughing, while prolonged exposure may trigger or exacerbate asthma and other chronic respiratory diseases. “Mold spores are a normal feature of our environment. However, they may become a problem if we make conditions too favorable for them and they are able to multiply on a larger scale,” says Andreas Kraus, a DEKRA building expert. “The key factor is permanently high humidity.”

Showering, washing, cooking, laundry – even house plants or aquariums – can all greatly increase humidity in the home. Very often, the ingress of moisture is facilitated by leaks or construction issues such as defective cladding, a burst pipe, a leaky roof, or a thermal bridge that cools a surface and produces more moisture.

“Painting over the damage without addressing the cause usually just postpones the problem,” warns building expert Kraus. Small-scale mold formation on surfaces can often be dealt with using commercial mold stopper sprays from the drugstore or hardware store. However, a professional is needed if the cause is unclear and the mold covers an area larger than half a square meter.

Each day, a three-person household releases between six and twelve liters of moisture into the ambient air. “Moisture should therefore be removed regularly from the air,” says the DEKRA expert. The most effective way of doing this is by fully ventilating rooms for several minutes more than once a day, if possible by creating a through draft. Moreover, larger quantities of moisture caused by showering, cooking, or washing should be evacuated directly outside rather than inside the home. It is also important to keep the doors to unheated rooms closed and place furniture and curtains at least ten centimeters away from cold exterior walls. (DEKRA Info)



*Used bikes: Get an expert opinion
before buying*

Used motorbikes

Checklist for buyers

Anyone intending to buy a used motorbike for the new season should take thorough advice before doing so – this is the recommendation from DEKRA's experts. In 2024, more than 468,000 used bikes changed owner. Specialist magazines, the Internet, and friends can provide information to back the decision. However, an experienced motorcycle expert should always be consulted, because four eyes see more than two. DEKRA has prepared a practical checklist covering the aspects that should be considered before buying. These range from identity, mileage, and checking for technical modifications, through warranty and exhaust, to test ride and purchase contract. It should also be ensured that a battery certificate is available in the case of electric motorcycles. (<https://www.dekra.de/de/tipps-fuer-biker/>) (DEKRA Info)



*Non-functioning windshield
wipers:
Defect in German statutory
inspections*

Worn windshield wipers

Defect in German statutory inspections

In Germany's statutory vehicle inspection, worn windshield wipers are considered a defect and must be replaced immediately. A damaged wiper blade might be rated as a minor defect but non-functioning or non-compliant wipers are a serious defect. This also applies to wipers on the rear window and headlamps because anything that is installed in a vehicle must function. At the latest, wiper blades should be replaced once they start leaving smears on the windshield, rub, or fail to clean properly. However, care should be taken when replacing them. When removing the old blades, the wiper arm – which is under tension – should be held firmly to prevent it from accidentally hitting the windshield, which could scratch or even crack the glass. It is therefore advisable to consult the operating instructions. (DEKRA Info)

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