

Former rental cars usually are good buys

Dear Tom and Ray:

What are your thoughts on buying a car from a rental agency? Would you buy one? — **Byr**

RAY: Sure. Rental-car companies sell relatively new cars, and they maintain them pretty well. After all, if anything's broken, it has to be fixed before the next

customer rents it.

TOM: And because the cars are pretty new, you often have years of warranty coverage left.

RAY: Used cars from rental companies used to be a great deal, because they'd keep them only for about six months, then turn them over for new ones. Now they keep

them longer than that, but they're still almost-new cars.

TOM: The only exception I'd make is for "specialty" cars. There are some rental companies that rent Camaros and Porsches, for people who want to drive one for a day or a weekend. I wouldn't buy a car like that from a rental company.

RAY: Why? Because if you rent a Porsche for 24 hours, what are you going to do? You're going to drive it like an animal. So, cars like that have the potential to have been abused or driven very hard by renters, without concern for their longevity.

TOM: But if you're buying a

family car — a Camry, Fusion, Altima, Focus, Civic — it's unlikely that anyone drove it abusively. It probably was driven to a hotel, and to a couple of meetings, and then back to the airport.

RAY: The worst that happens to most of those cars is that a grande latte gets spilled on the seat. So give the passenger compartment a sniff test before you buy. But mechanically, a former rental car should be a good bet.