

# The Consumer

A PUBLICATION OF THE  
CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION  
OF SINGAPORE

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# President's Message



**Dear readers,**

Buying a car can be both an exciting and nerve-racking experience. On one hand, we look forward to the joy and convenience of having our own car. On the other hand, we may be concerned that you are not getting the best value for the high price which we pay for the car. Thus, it is important for consumers to equip themselves with as much knowledge as possible before buying a car.

There are many factors to consider before you make that final decision to get your car. Besides the technical aspects about engine capacity, fuel consumption, comfort etc., you should also consider other important factors that will have a significant bearing on your finances. In this issue, the Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS) highlights some useful pointers to look out for before you commit to your purchase.

The motor vehicle industry remains one of CASE's biggest concerns due to high number of complaints regarding defects in pre-owned cars. As such, CASE has developed the Standard and Functional Evaluation (SAFE) Checklist to guide consumers through the tedious and complicated process of buying a pre-owned car. Read on to find out how the SAFE Checklist can help buyers.

Besides finding out more about the process of buying a car, consumers should also understand more about the need to maintain your car. Some may have heard horror stories of how some unscrupulous workshop owners

charge consumers for excessive repairs that may not have been necessary, just so they can profit on an unsuspecting consumer. The Automobile Association of Singapore provides a few important tips that will help you in the process of selecting a workshop, so you don't have to worry should the need arises.

Our friends from CHOICE in Australia are also kind enough to share what consumers should do when your car needs towing. Though from a foreign source, their advice is still relevant in the local context. It is useful for you to bear these tips in mind and so you will not panic if your car breaks down or when caught in an accident.

Finally, CASE recently launched Price Kaki (on a pilot basis in three towns), a mobile application to help consumers compare in-store prices of common household items, groceries, and hawker food through a single platform. Read on to find out how Price Kaki can help you compare, choose and stretch your dollar.

**Lim Biow Chuan**  
**CASE President**



# Selecting a Suitable Car Repair Workshop



**When dealing with car repair problems, it can be a time-consuming process to select the right shop. Asking the right questions is key. Learn important tips that will help you select the most suitable shop.**

As a car owner, you will require the service of a car repair workshop at some time or another. So it is a good idea to find a local car repair workshop that you can trust, and one that does not hand you a hefty bill each time you send your car in for repairs. Repairing a vehicle can be costly, so selecting your repairer carefully can be a real advantage. However, before you select a repairer, here are some things you should do that will help you find a suitable car repair workshop.







Shop around before car trouble strikes. If you are in a rush to get your car to the shop, your judgement might be clouded as you may feel under pressure to make a hasty decision in order to get your car back as soon as possible; rather than saving money or receiving top-notch service.

Always do your research and ask around your network for references. Often the best referrals come from friends and family who have had experience with workshops. Getting a word-of-mouth referral from friends and family can also mean you will get honest insight about their experience with those repair workshops, which can help you save money or avoid a scam.

When you have a few references – find out more information about them online as this will give you a better idea of the workshops. Your friends and family could have provided you with great advice with the repairs shops they have experienced, but they might not have covered all of your options or had a major car issues that needed attention. Read some online reviews from other consumers about how they felt about the service offered to them.

Do not choose based solely on price. While price may affect your choice, do not just opt for the cheapest price. Whilst the cheapest rate may not always come with the worst service, the most expensive rate might not also offer the highest level of service. Find out if there is any warranty for the repair job done and the type of guarantee the workshop provides on repair works. Warranties can vary greatly among workshops, so ask about them ahead of time. Use a common repair, such as brake work, as your guide.

As a consumer, you have the right to ask a shop about things like their credentials, experience, customer service, and warranty policies. Remember to ask about the certifications and accreditations the workshops might also hold. It would be more assuring to know that there is some form of affiliation or accreditation to the workshops recognised and certified by a reputable organisation or association.





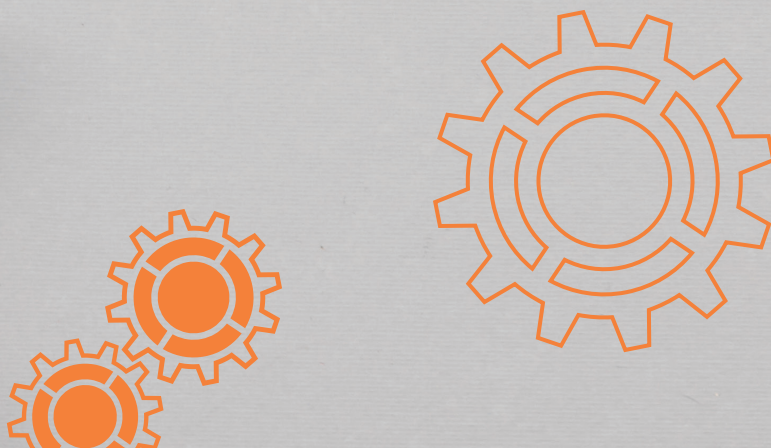
Find out if your problem requires a specialist repairer. A general repairer may not have the skills and equipment to fix more vehicle-specific repairs such as air conditioning or an automatic transmission repair.

Always get an estimate of the repair works from the workshop. Written estimates can assure you that the shop is not going to keep tacking on unnecessary services. Additionally, written estimates that are far from the same can mean that a shop has charged you for unnecessary repairs and parts replacement. It may also signify that the workshop could have misdiagnosed the problem.

Let the workshop mechanics explain to you so that you understand. Very often, mechanics may speak in jargon that someone unfamiliar with cars might not understand.

Find out if the workshop is familiar with your car's make. Make sure you are aware of the problem and the required repairs before you choose from one of the car repair workshops in your area.

If you feel that you are still unsure of how to select a reliable workshop, you can always seek a third party opinion. Contact the Automobile Association of Singapore at 6333 8811 to find out more about our approved workshops or visit our website at <https://www.aas.com.sg> for more information.





# Towing the Line

## – Taken for a Ride?



### **Some tow truck companies will try to take advantage of drivers after an accident. Here's what to do if your car needs towing.**

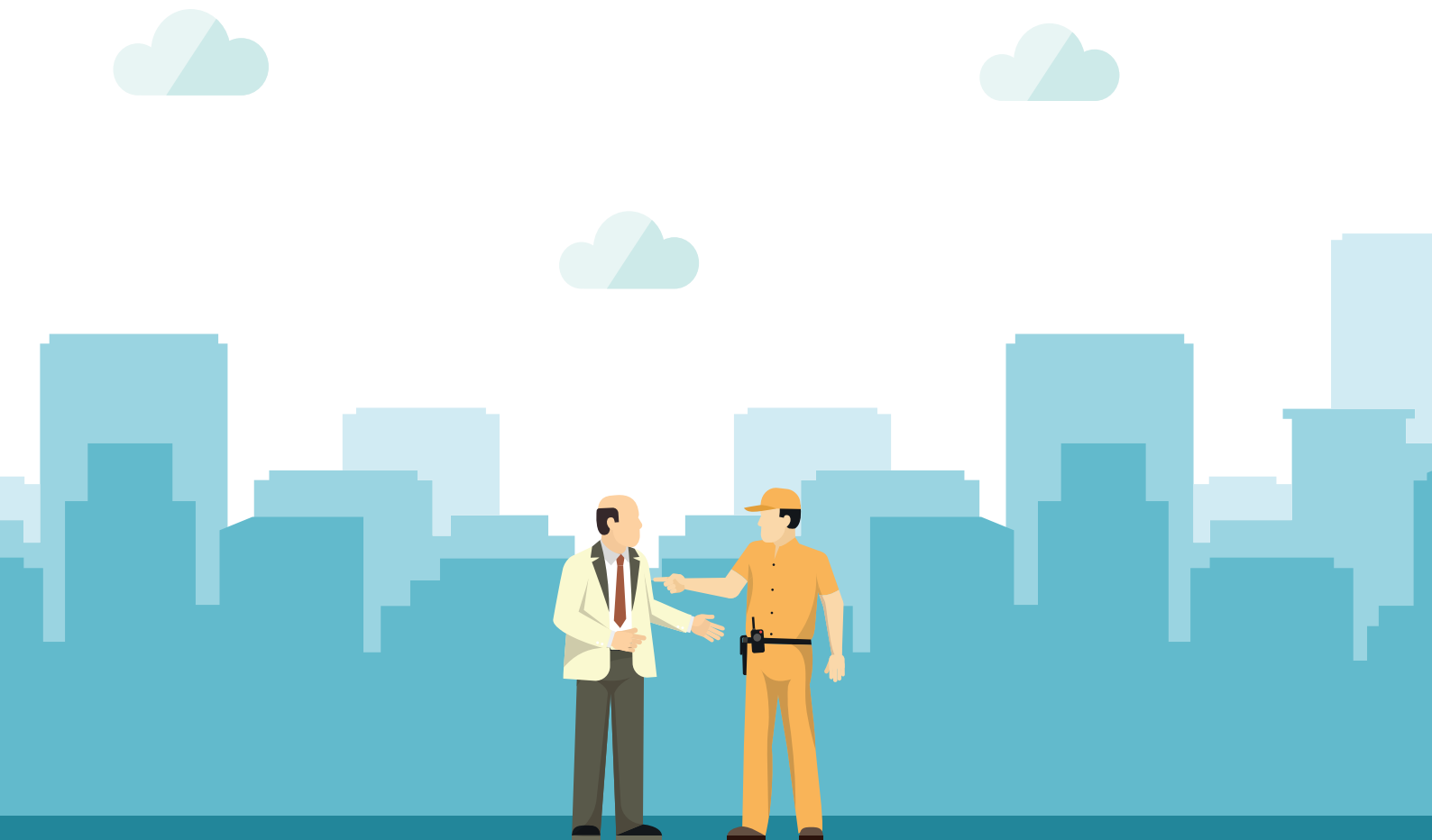
It's impossible not to stress out when you've had a bingle: you're in shock, there's traffic banking up behind you and all you can think about is getting your car off the road and getting out of there. Then suddenly a tow truck driver arrives to move your car and you're so relieved you could just about kiss them.

But do you just go with the first tow truck to arrive on the scene and trust that they'll take care of you? We'll talk you through what to do, what to watch out for, and what the rules are around tow trucks in your region.

"While it is safe to use most tow truck providers, if you have a crash and your vehicle is not drivable we recommend you call your insurer as soon as possible and let them organise the tow," a Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ) spokesperson says. "Insurers may have limits on how much they will pay for towing after a crash and you don't want to be caught out of pocket."

Remember too that it's illegal for anyone to harass or coerce you into buying goods or services, so don't let anyone pressure you into accepting a tow if you're not comfortable with it.





## Always read the fine print

With accident towing paperwork, any dodgy deviations from standard practice will be buried in the fine print, so make sure you take the time to read it thoroughly. (Hard to do when you're still shaking from the car crash, we know, but five minutes' reading time could save you months of pain in the long run.)

Many states (in Australia) have regulated forms issued by the state government, so if it looks more like a brochure or a contract than a standard form, be suspicious.

"Don't sign any documents at the scene of an accident except the regulated towing authorisation forms. The form should only collect appropriate information about the car and contact details, and you should get a copy," says Campbell Fuller, the Insurance Council of Australia's general manager of communications and media relations.



## Carnapping and how to avoid it

Some towing companies take advantage of your state of mind after an accident and get you to sign dodgy documentation while you're frazzled and unlikely to check the fine print. This is known in the industry as 'carnapping'.

Along with giving towing companies permission to tow your vehicle, some of these contracts also contain particularly unpleasant terms, like locking you into using a particular repairer who'll charge you (or your insurer) inflated fees for repairs or storage.

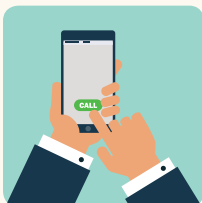
"If you get locked into charges over and above what your insurer covers under your policy, you may be left to foot the bill, so always contact your insurer before signing anything," an RACQ spokesperson says.







## I need a tow truck – what do I do?



### Contact your insurer

Before you do – or sign – anything, call your insurance provider. They may be able to organise a tow for you and tell you what to expect.



### Read the fine print

Always read the terms and conditions on any form. If it looks suspicious, don't sign it – you could be signing up for more than you bargained for.



### Check your cover

Towing cover varies from insurer to insurer and you may not be covered for towing. It's a good idea to review your product disclosure statement to check your policy's limits.



### It's your choice

You get to decide where your car is towed to.



### Don't sign on the dotted line

Never sign a blank or incomplete towing authority form. Make sure it includes the full address of where the car is being towed to and the towing fee.



### Take your time

If you need time to consider your options, get the car towed to your home. That way you won't be charged storage fees and you can make a decision when your head's clearer – although you may end up having to pay for two tows.



# Buying a Car: Dream or Nightmare?



Many dream of owning the latest fancy car, but the process of buying a car and ensuring that you have made an informed decision is not an easy one. How do you prevent your experience and purchase from turning into a nightmare?

There are several elements in the purchasing process that can be novel to a consumer. For example, when you enter a showroom, you would find yourself with plenty of options and sales staff eager to serve you. A lot of detailed information on new and used cars will also be presented to you. Some models boast of their fuel and energy efficiency, while others, of their safety features and cutting-edge technology.

While a car is an exciting purchase, reviewing the technical aspect of cars, the COE price package, the insurance coverage, and purchase agreements as well as loan terms can be a daunting task for many as the hefty price tag comes with a long-term commitment.

The motoring industry has been one of the industries with the highest number of consumer complaints received by CASE each year. Hence, it is important for you to do research and be alert to unfair trade practices so that you can better safeguard your interests. A hasty decision could result in further losses down the road. How can you shop smart and make an informed decision when buying a car?

## BUYERS BEWARE, PROTECT YOURSELF





# 6 Smarter Ways To Buy A Motor Vehicle



01

## Select a Reputable Retailer

- Do your research
- Make comparisons
- Buy from CaseTrust-SVTA\* accredited retailer ([www.casetrust.org.sg](http://www.casetrust.org.sg))
- Check if retailer is on CASE's watch list ([www.case.org.sg/companyalertlist](http://www.case.org.sg/companyalertlist))

\*Singapore Vehicle Traders Association



02

## Understand Contract Terms & Conditions

- Obtain customer copy of signed sales contract
- Contract must clearly indicate all agreed warranty, service packages and car accessories, Certificate of Entitlement (COE), road tax and insurance
- Commit verbal agreements in writing
- Be aware of payment terms and schedules
- Negotiate for lowest amount of deposit to minimise risk
- Include all refund arrangements in contract
- Do not sign on blank forms



03

## Check COE Terms & Conditions

- COE in price package listed as conditional or unconditional guarantee?
- Number of bids and bidding sequence regardless of COE condition
- COE rebate level (if any)
- Deposit requirements when bidding for COE
- Refund policy following failure to secure COE within the number of bids agreed



04

## Ensure Receipts are obtained at Payment

Insist on official receipts for all payments. All transactions must be accounted for.



05

## Confirm Trade-In Information of Used Cars

Information on person or company your used car is being traded-in to must be indicated in the sales contract.



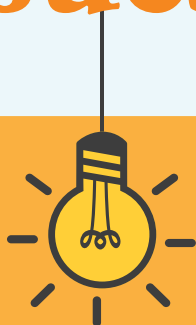
06

## Contact CASE on Unfair Trade Practices

Contact CASE at 6100 0315 or submit complaint online at [www.case.org.sg](http://www.case.org.sg)



# Consumer Issues & Solutions



Dear CASE,

I recently bought a vacuum cleaner and requested for delivery to my home. However, when the vacuum cleaner arrived the next day, it was dusty around the corners and had scratches on the side of it. Not thinking much of it, I cleaned it up and started to use it. After three months, the vacuum cleaner became defective, so I took it back to the shop to ask for an exchange. The staff there told me that the validity for one-to-one exchange was only for a month and that if I wanted, I could only send it for repairs.

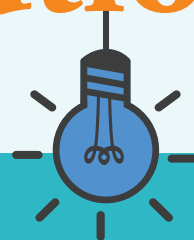
I was shocked by their response and felt I should be entitled to an exchange since the vacuum cleaner was defective. What should I do in this situation?

A

Dear A,

Under the Lemon Law, businesses are obligated to repair, replace, reduce the price or provide a refund for defective goods. If the defect is found within six months of delivery, it is assumed the defect existed at the time of delivery, unless the business can prove otherwise. This is to protect consumers against goods that do not conform to contract or are not satisfactory quality or performance standards at the time of delivery.

Please feel free to approach CASE if you require assistance to resolve your complaint against the retailer.



Dear CASE,

I was walking in a shopping mall when I got pulled in by a salesperson promoting a skincare product. She told me to take a seat and proceeded to apply the product on my hand while explaining its benefits. I was taken aback by this but I could not even get a word out or reject her. She then started to sell me the product and told me that this price will not be available again while holding on to my arm the whole time. I initially refused and said no but she kept insisting that this will be a good buy. I was in a hurry to meet my friend, so I finally relented and paid the few hundred dollars just to get out of that situation. I am hoping for a full refund as I never intended to purchase anything from them in the first place.

B

Dear B,

Taking advantage of a consumer by exerting undue pressure or influence is considered an unfair practice under the Consumer Protection Fair Trading Act (CPFTA). We encourage you to consider approaching CASE to submit your complaint against the retailer.

We would like to remind consumers to say 'no' and walk away immediately if you feel uncomfortable from aggressive pressure selling. Businesses are not allowed to keep you against your will, and you should call the police if that's the case.

**We want to hear from you!**

Have a story to share? Email it to [editorial@case.org.sg](mailto:editorial@case.org.sg) (max. 200 words).



# In a Nutshell

## Did You Know?

### Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) (Motor Vehicle Dealer Deposits) Regulations 2009

It is an act which states a motor vehicle dealer has to inform the consumer of its refund policy in writing before he collects any deposit from them.



Otherwise, the dealer cannot retain the deposit or any part of it.



### Motor vehicle dealer who applies for a loan on behalf of a consumer:

Must do so within a reasonable period.



If the consumer requests, obtain a written statement from the financial institution stating the unsuccessful outcome of the loan application.



### What happens if there is a dispute?

The motor vehicle dealer bears the burden of proof that he has complied with the requirements under the regulations.



# Consumer Happenings



## Consumer Outreach at Singapore Management University

CASE was happy to be at Singapore Management University (SMU) in October to share with students their consumer rights, how they can protect themselves, and the role of mediation as an alternative dispute resolution avenue. Students also participated in a role-playing exercise to understand how stakeholders in a consumer transaction interact with one another.





## Price Kaki Roadshows

To raise awareness and adoption of our brand new mobile app, Price Kaki, CASE organised roadshows at Toa Payoh HDB Hub and Jurong Point on 6th October and 21st to 27th October respectively. Consumers learned more about how to use the app to search and compare prices of common household items, groceries and hawker food.





# PRICE KAKI

Your go-to price guide

Do you shop in Jurong West, Tampines or Toa Payoh?



**PRICE KAKI** is here to help you compare prices and discover promotions for household items, groceries, and hawker food!



Available on Apple's App Store and Google Play from 28 September 2019!



## What can you do with Price Kaki?

- Compare prices and discover promotions for around 3,000 household items and groceries sold in NTUC FairPrice, Giant, Sheng Siong and Prime Supermarket.
- Compare prices of hawker food.
- Be informed of discounts for your favourite items.
- Locate supermarkets and hawker centres nearby.
- Help to keep prices and promotions updated and earn points in our weekly competition. Our most active users will stand to win vouchers!

## 3 easy steps to look for items

- 1 Choose between groceries or hawker food.
- 2 Search using the name of the item or scan the barcode.
- 3 Select the item you want to see more details on price and promotions.



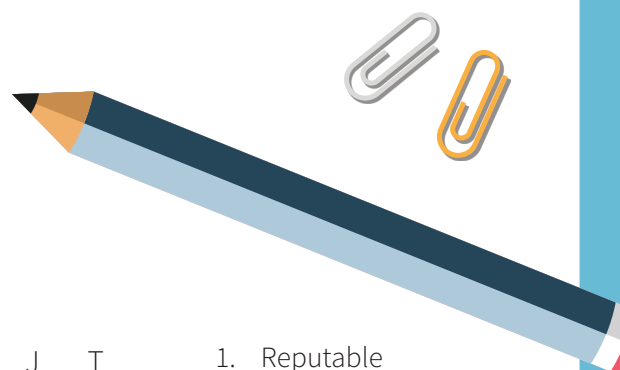
Consumers Association of Singapore

WE HEAR | WE INFORM | WE EDUCATE | WE PROTECT

# CASEPlay!

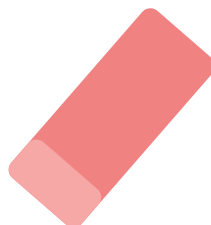
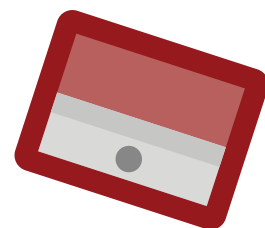
# Word Search

**Have fun searching for these words that are related to automobiles!**  
(Answers are provided at the bottom of this page.)



E	P	Z	H	R	V	Y	R	B	L	G	J	C	J	T
Y	V	Y	D	G	D	P	O	L	I	C	Y	O	E	J
S	B	A	I	R	B	E	H	O	C	I	X	N	M	A
B	V	W	L	V	E	C	F	H	L	V	U	T	Z	A
V	Q	B	U	U	Q	P	E	E	B	K	F	R	E	Y
M	K	T	E	Q	A	C	U	S	C	Z	N	A	Z	T
Q	M	N	S	O	K	T	P	T	P	T	P	C	W	N
Y	C	O	S	L	M	P	I	B	A	M	I	T	P	A
D	A	G	I	R	X	V	N	O	T	B	F	V	V	R
I	K	S	R	E	F	U	N	D	N	L	L	R	E	R
I	T	W	O	R	K	S	H	O	P	C	R	E	I	A
M	M	E	C	T	F	H	W	F	W	S	V	B	D	W
Q	G	M	F	Q	M	C	R	N	J	F	G	H	V	Y
D	E	I	F	I	T	R	E	C	D	S	P	T	K	X
K	J	R	F	H	M	E	J	D	I	V	W	L	C	T

1. Reputable
2. Certified
3. Checklist
4. Refund
5. Warranty
6. Defective
7. Contract
8. Evaluation
9. Policy
10. Workshop



# What to Do Before Buying a Pre-owned Car

## Driving Up Awareness of the SAFE Checklist

From 2016 to 2018, the Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) received over 7,000 complaints about the motorcar industry, of which over 3,000 complaints relate to defective or non-conforming goods. It is an alarming figure considering that complaints on defective goods constitute close to half of those numbers.

CASE always tries to remain on the front foot with initiatives such as the Standard and Functional Evaluation (SAFE) Checklist to promote fair trading. Designed with consumers in mind, it is meant to guide buyers through the process of purchasing a pre-owned car.

For such an expensive buy, it can no doubt become a stressful experience because there is a cloud of uncertainty surrounding the quality of your purchase. This is especially so when it comes to pre-owned goods since consumers have no idea about the history behind the products they are buying.





On top of that, a car has so many different components with some defects not detectable with the naked eye, which makes it natural for consumers to worry that problems will arise down the road and hit them like a curve ball.

Let's take a look at Mr N's\* experience to help us better understand how his situation could have been prevented.

Mr N purchased a pre-owned car and got his friend to do a casual inspection to see if there were any issues. Nine months later, much to his dismay, problems started to surface while driving. Mr N later sent his vehicle for further inspection and discovered the car had an oil leaking problem and a faulty axle. He tried to request that the merchant bear the cost of the repairs, but they refused and claimed these problems were not there when they sold him the car.

Since the defect was found six months after delivery, Mr N bore the burden of proof. Unfortunately, he did not do a thorough inspection at a Professional Evaluation Centre and had no way to prove that the defect existed at the time of delivery in order to make a claim under the Lemon Law.

Mr N approached CASE for advice and through mediation managed to settle for a partial coverage of the repair costs with the motor vehicle dealer.



Mr N must be feeling aggrieved to not know if the defects from his recent purchase existed at the point of delivery. This could have been avoided if Mr N had used the SAFE Checklist to assess the condition of his car and get the dealer and a professional evaluation centre to sign off on the checklist.

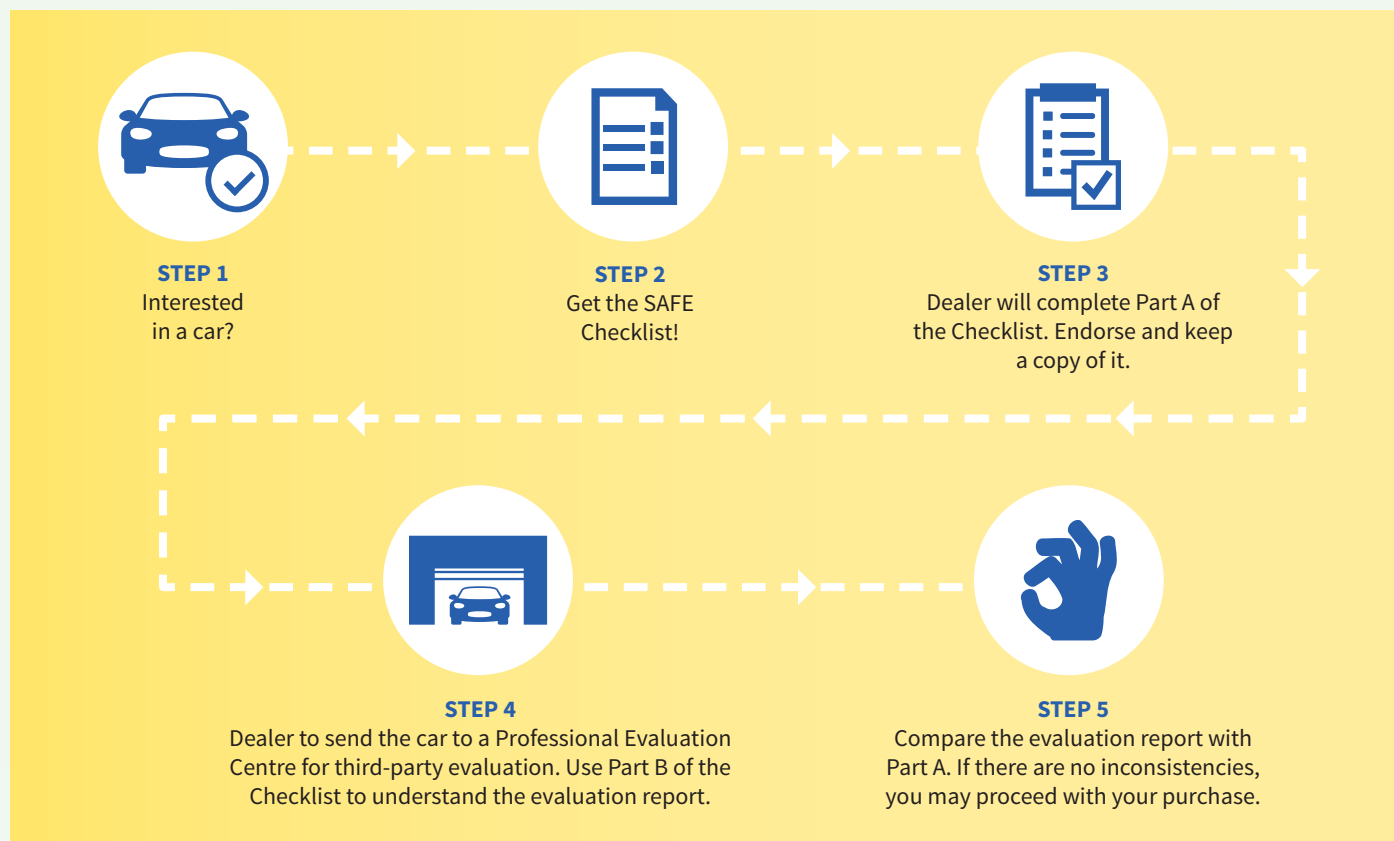
For a more in-depth look into the SAFE Checklist, read on to see what the different components of the Checklist are and how you can utilise it during your next purchase. It would be helpful for consumers to have a form of assurance that they are getting their money's worth for such a costly buy.



## Using the SAFE Checklist

It comprises of *Part A: Checks by Car Dealer* and *Part B: Checks by Professional Evaluation Centre*.

Use the SAFE Checklist to guide you through your car purchase. Here are five easy steps to a SAFE purchase!



## Part A: Checks by the Car Dealer

Consumers should request that the car dealer complete Part A of the Checklist for the car.

Part A of the Checklist records:

- Car details
- Functional checks
- Visual checks
- Warranty coverage (where applicable)

Both the consumer and dealer should endorse and keep a copy of the Checklist.

*Sample: Part A of the Checklist*

Description	Details
Car brand and model	
Registration number	
Import details of car	Authorised Dealer / Parallel Importer / Self-Imported / Dealer is unaware *(delete as applicable)
Name of dealer	
	Part III of the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act (Lemon Law) only applies to a consumer's purchase(s) from a <u>business</u> . Hence, if you are purchasing the car on consignment or direct from another individual/consumer, you will <b>not</b> be covered under Lemon Law.
Projected delivery date	

## Part B: Checks by the Professional Evaluation Centre

Part B allows consumers to better understand the key parts of the Professional Evaluation Report and allow consumers to make an informed choice on their purchase.

A VICOM FIT Evaluation, STA Evaluation and AAS Car Evaluation Service Check consist of the minimum checks set out in Part B.

Where possible, consumers are encouraged to test drive the pre-owned car before committing to a purchase as defects may sometimes surface during the test drive.

Consumers with queries on their Professional Evaluation Report should contact the relevant centres.

### Professional Evaluation Centres



#### VICOM FIT EVALUATION

##### VICOM Inspection Centre (Kaki Bukit)

23 Kaki Bukit Ave 4  
Singapore 415933  
Tel: (65) 6458 4555

##### VICOM Inspection Centre (Bukit Batok)

511 Bukit Batok St 23  
Singapore 659545  
Tel: (65) 6458 4555

<http://www.vicom.com.sg/Our-Services/Vehicle-Evaluation>



#### STA EVALUATION

##### STA Evaluation Centre (Sin Ming)

302 Sin Ming Road  
Singapore 575627  
Tel : (65) 6453 0200

##### STA Evaluation Centre (Kaki Bukit)

13 Kaki Bukit Road 4, #01-02  
Bartley Biz Centre  
Singapore 417807  
Tel : (65) 6384 0606

<https://stai.com.sg/car-evaluation/>



AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION  
OF SINGAPORE

#### AA CAR EVALUATION SERVICE

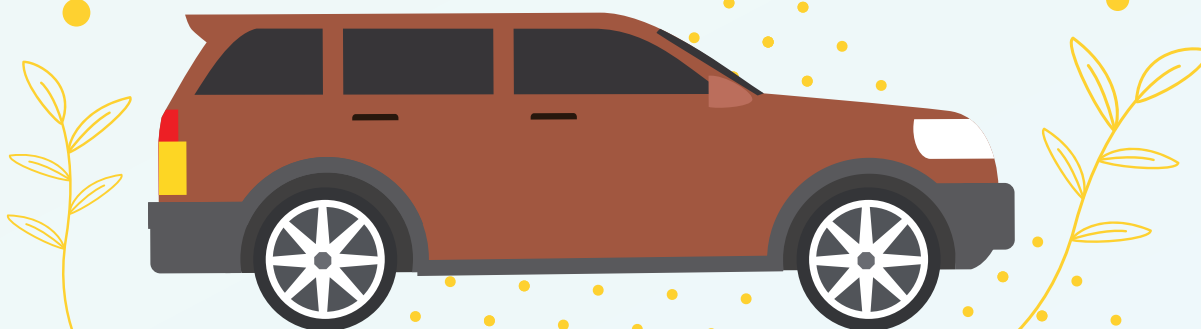
##### Automobile Association of Singapore

2 Kung Chong Road  
#03-01 AA Centre  
Singapore 159140  
Tel: (65) 6389 4270 / 6333 8811

<https://www.aas.com.sg/our-services/car-evaluation.html>

Sample: Part B of the Checklist

Items checked	Description of checks performed
Engine	Includes visual inspection to identify oil seepage, overheating and abnormal engine noise and condition of the drive belt. <i>Note: A Professional Evaluation Centre may not perform checks on the following engine types: Electric, LPG, CNG or Hybrid system engine.</i>
Engine Mounting	Includes checks to identify abnormal vibrations resulting from the defective engine mounting.
Fluid Level	Includes various dipstick checks to ensure that there is sufficient engine oil, power steering fluid (if applicable), transmission oil, brake fluid, cooling system water level, clutch fluid and a visual inspection for potential contamination of the fluids.
Transmission Box	Includes road tests and checks to identify abnormal noises during engine operation, including the gear transactions.



Besides the SAFE Checklist, CASE would also like to remind consumers when purchasing a pre-owned car to bear in mind the following:



**Do not sign blank forms. Signing of blank forms is akin to signing a blank cheque and it could result in fraudulent entries without you knowing it.**



**For pre-owned cars, there is limited warranty. Due to previous usage, there could be some wear and tear. If possible, go with someone with experience in buying pre-owned cars.**



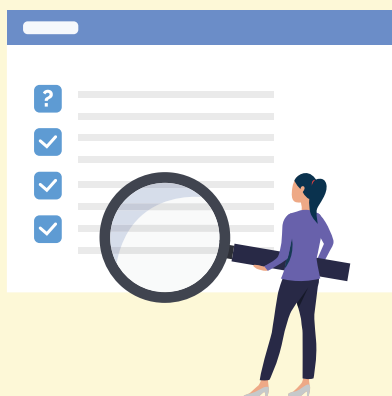
**Question the vendor on the history of the car. Send the car for inspection immediately if you suspect something faulty after the purchase.**



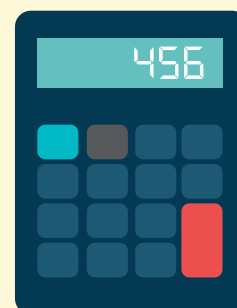
**Know the procedures, laws and policies involved in a car purchase. First, a Certificate of Entitlement (COE) has to be obtained; next, a hire purchase loan has to be obtained.**







**Find out more about hire-purchase transactions. Consumers should find out more about details of the hire-purchase arrangements, e.g. computation of interest payable/monthly instalments, and early settlement.**



**Do your sums before you sign.**



**Ensure that the contract states in writing that the deposit will be refunded if the loan is not approved.**



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At the end of the day, the SAFE Checklist is meant to help consumers ride out the daunting process of buying a car. Consumers should not have to deal with the worry of a defective purchase, and they won't have to with the Checklist. The full copy can be downloaded from the CASE website or through the QR code found below. Alternatively, you can obtain a copy from your dealer.

SAFE Checklist:



\*Disclaimer: Mr N's case is fictitious. In mediation, the outcome is determined by the parties involved and is therefore not indicative of mediation outcomes at CASE.

# 功能鞋垫

## 助您行走更顺畅？

文 / 罗 素（特约采访编辑）

有扁平足、高弓足、长短脚、足底筋膜炎的民众，可能使用功能鞋垫来缓解不适。提醒消费者购买功能鞋垫前，应先经过医师诊断，看是否有必要使用鞋垫来改善症状，或循其他治疗方法，并须注意功能鞋垫只是辅助用途，虽能改善疼痛情况，但不代表足以完全矫正脚型。

庄先生是扁平足患者，虽不用服兵役，但也长期饱受扁平足困扰，由于他内侧足弓下陷，足底呈现扁平状，甚至贴于地面，导致足部压力不均，每次长时间走路就痛。庄先生向复健科医师咨询，测出足底压力后，医师建议他穿上附功能鞋垫的矫正鞋，藉由功能鞋垫撑起足弓，改善疼痛感。不过，坊间有相当多业者贩售功能鞋垫，该如何选择，才能找到适合自己的产品？







## 足部问题的形成

在介绍功能鞋垫种类及使用注意事项前，消费者应先了解足部问题，如扁平足、高弓足、长短脚等，究竟如何形成的。

林口长庚医院复健科医师邓复旦指出，扁平足患者的足弓低。足弓是指脚内侧呈弧状的部分，就像拱桥，其作用是提供缓冲、避震的能力，人走路、跑步、站立、甚至跳跃时，足弓能减缓脚部所承受的压力与来自地面的反作用力，若缺少足弓，将使身体承重轴线改变，进而影响膝关节或髋关节，容易产生退化。

过去复健科医师高木荣与其团队，曾利用足底压力分析仪等工具，对1万8,000多名台湾的国小生进行足部健检，发现一成四学童，有着程度不一的扁平足情形，另有约百分之一学童有高弓足情形，由此数据检视，台湾患有扁平足症状的人并不少见。

临床上将扁平足区分为「僵硬型」与「柔软型」，前者是当站立或脚悬空时，

都没有足弓；后者则是脚悬空时，足弓就出现。扁平足常见的治疗方式，包括肌肉训练、手术、穿矫正鞋。肌肉训练部分，主要是练后胫骨肌，多垫脚尖、跳跃，使足弓恢复正常；亦可透过微创手术，在距骨下关节放入钛合金植入物，让身体肌腱随着持续生长，永久定型在正确的位置；至于穿矫正鞋，是在足底加上一个功能鞋垫，支撑足弓，防止足踝的外翻。

高弓足则是指足弓偏高的脚形，常见症状是患者会感觉到身体重量大多集中在双脚的前、后端，在走路或站立时容易酸痛，另外，高弓足患者因足弓过高，容易造成脚踝以上的下肢关节产生外旋的动作，进而带出整个足部异常外旋，因此走路变成外八，足踝也容易扭伤。

「长短脚」顾名思义就是两脚的长度不一致，导致走路容易歪一边、跌倒，若没有矫正，长时间下来恐造成下背痛、坐骨神经痛、髋关节退化，甚至脊椎侧弯。欲治疗长短脚，除了根据双脚施力状况订制鞋

垫外，也可在物理治疗师协助下，用徒手治疗的方式矫正骨盆。

事实上，扁平足和高弓足患者，在中年之后特别容易罹患足底筋膜炎，其典型症状是早起下床走第一步会感到剧痛，另外民众走路会采避痛的走姿；临床上则是从足底可察觉到明确痛点。

内湖康宁医院骨科主任李文吉曾在《元气网》撰文指出，走、站、跑、跳引起的拉扯，会造成肌腱或筋膜发炎，通常休息、泡泡脚就会好；但可能因使用过度或退化，发炎的筋（肌）膜无法痊愈，衍生为慢性筋膜炎，或退化性（纤维化）筋膜炎，这就是足底筋膜炎。

足底筋膜炎常见的治疗方式，包括吃药、打类固醇、复健等，另外，接受骨震波治疗是可以考虑的选择。三总复健科医师李宗颖表示，穿上功能鞋垫能有效支撑足弓、分散足底压力，对于改善足底筋膜炎也有效果。

## 功能鞋垫怎么选？

目前市面上针对扁平足、高弓足、长短脚等，业者推出多款不同的功能鞋垫，除了材质不同，如矽胶、软凝胶、EVA（醋酸乙烯）等，产品也经常宣称能有效矫正患部，缓解足部压力，并且无毒、环保，但因为价格差距甚大，民众必须慎选。

销售鞋垫的业者李义宗表示，一般鞋垫在选择上有六大重点，一、用足弓及脚型来做为选择鞋垫的依据；二、要能改善姿势、减少肌肉劳损；三、鞋垫不要剪裁得太贴合脚趾头；四、鞋垫必须能紧贴足弓；五、剪鞋垫时要先和原本的鞋垫比较；六、不同运动需要不同硬度的鞋垫。

功能鞋垫部分，李义宗说明主要分为几个类别，包括：

### ① 矫正鞋垫

指具有医疗矫正用途的鞋垫，由医院方面配合的专业辅具师制作，属于医疗器材。

### ② 订制鞋垫

指依消费者足压大小，客製化制作的鞋垫，不见得有医疗用途。

### ③ 舒软鞋垫

主要是改善足部皮肤摩擦部位疼痛感。

### ④ 调整鞋垫

指可依鞋子的差异，进行支撑度调整的鞋垫。

李义宗表示，功能鞋垫虽能改善疼痛情况，让站立与走路比较顺畅，但不代表足以完全矫正脚型，鞋垫只是辅助用途。鞋垫的制作可以采取全手工订制，由辅具师打造整双矫正鞋与功能鞋垫，满足特殊异常足弓的需求；也可用修改半成品的方式，依据消费者的需求，加热既有的鞋垫后重新塑形，最后是直接成型的鞋垫，能让消费者依照体重、足部大小等选择尺寸与硬度。

李义宗说明，功能鞋垫价差很大的主要原因在于手工订制或直接成型，手工订制、量身打造款可能高达5,000~6,000元；直接成型的功能鞋垫，因为是大量生产，价格相对较低，也深受许多消费者青睐，但不论是哪种鞋垫，民众还是得先导正日常生活中的错误姿势与活动习惯。清理鞋垫的方式，李义宗则说，可使用软毛刷以清水或肥皂水清洗，洗完后不要用烘干机、吹风机，因为遇热可能变形，放置在通风良好处荫干即可。







### 经医师诊断 有必要再选用鞋垫

三总复健科医师李宗颖表示，消费者购买功能鞋垫前，应先经过医师诊断症状，看是否有必要使用鞋垫来改善症状，抑或可透过其他治疗方式改善，因为脚痛的原因很多，不见得换鞋垫就有帮助，基本的物理治疗有时候就能达到改善效果。医师会先替患者测量足底压力，找出脚痛的可能原因，再给予适当的建议，一般而言，鞋垫的价格高低落差大，但贵不一定好，适应症正确才是重要。

此外，很多鞋垫宣称添加奈米、竹炭，但对于改善足部压力不见得有太大帮助，却因此收费更高，消费者还是要多看多比较。李宗颖说，每个人的症状、脚的尺寸都不同，若确定要买鞋垫，应先到实体门市试用，而功能鞋垫的作用毕竟是改善生活品质、步态和足底压力，无法完全矫正脚内部的骨骼结构，因此患者若穿起来觉得不舒服，也不必强迫自己无时无刻都穿。

曾为奥运级随队医师的长庚复健科医师叶文凌直言，目前鞋垫很难界定是否归属

医疗器材，除非是取得卫福部许可的医疗级辅具，否则其他产品并不能宣称医疗效果，即便业者在推销产品前，有替消费者量过足压，都不能代表这个产品具有医疗效果。民众若确诊足部有严重疼痛问题，应先经由医师诊断，并透过医院委由专业厂商订制矫正鞋垫。因为辅具厂商要申请和医院合作，其所使用的材料肯定不能对人体有害，且产品本身也获得卫福部、医师与复健师认可，相较于市售某些宣称有疗效的功能鞋垫，更有保障，而且价格也不见得较贵。

叶文凌并指，坊间有很多鞋垫的销售厂商，无法明确向消费者解释为何需要购买鞋垫，而是不断强力的推销，消费者购买使用后发现症状没改善，到医院就诊才惊觉脚痛原因并不单纯，这种案例经常发生，必须提醒民众不要花冤枉钱。

事实上，在台湾民俗调理风气盛行的情况下，许多民众一旦出现脚痛情况，也不一定会直接去医院就诊，反而先选择

去脚底按摩，根据卫生福利部订定的「民俗调理业管理规范」，脚底按摩非属医疗行为。民俗调理业者也不得有下列行为，包括以口语或其他方式提供医疗或药物咨询建议；自行调制药品；贩卖药品、医疗器材。

消基会义务律师黄钰嫻表示，专业的医疗器材必须依《药事法》之规定办理查验登记，取得药物许可证始得制造，领有药商许可执照才能贩售，若非属医疗器材，却宣称有医疗效果，则违反《药事法》。她建议民众应先就诊，由医师与复健师来告知应选购哪些产品，比较合适。

台湾民众的足部疾病，除了天生的扁平足、高弓足之外，和本身的生活型态也有很大关系，比如常穿高跟鞋走路，或者走路姿势不正确等。消费者须注意，鞋垫并非万能，一旦足部出现疼痛，应尽快找出问题所在，对症治疗才是根本之道。

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