



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

BUYING A USED SEMI TRAILER



Presented by Maxim Truck & Trailer



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Used or new? It's a question families wrestle with before buying a vehicle and it's no different in the trucking business.

Tom Klassen, trailer inventory & used sales manager at Maxim Truck & Trailer, knows it's not an easy decision for entrepreneurs and companies moving goods across Canada and into the U.S. In the following questions, Tom will spell out the case for buying used. In doing so he'll factor in safeties, whether you need a refrigerator and the type of floor that fits your individual situation.





**The newest used trailer
you can buy can be less
than a year old**

1 Why should I buy a used trailer?

In a word, cost. It's like buying a used car. When you buy a one-year-old car, you save a tremendous amount of money compared to buying a new car, without significantly sacrificing quality.

2 How new can a used trailer be?

The newest used trailer you can buy can be less than a year old. We're selling 2015 model trailers now but you can buy a 2014 model used. One customer bought a truck and trailer, drove it for three months and decided it wasn't for him.

3 Is this a good time to buy new or used?

The current exchange rate can be a factor in the used trailer market. When the U.S. dollar is high it makes trailers originally manufactured in the U.S. more expensive.

4 What is the availability of used trailers?

A new trailer has to be ordered and it can take two months to a year to get in. A used trailer could be sitting on the lot.

5 Does a trailer need to have a provincial trailer safety and does that impact the price of the trailer?

There are three ways to buy a trailer – with a new safety, the current safety or as is. With a new safety, it's brought in to the shop, inspected and if it's given a clean bill of health, it gets a new sticker on it with the same date one year from now.

With a current safety, if the trailer was inspected last November 30, the sticker will say November 30, 2014.

With "As Is," the safety has expired and before it can go on the highway carrying a load, it needs a new safety.

A safety costs \$150 but it can determine if your suspension is wrecked, if there are cracks in the frame, if there is rust on the side walls or the tires need to be replaced. Buying an "As Is" trailer significantly reduces the price. If it has a market value of \$10,000 but needs \$4,000 worth of work, it would sell for \$6,000. With a new safety, it would sell for \$10,000.





The latest reefer service report will let you know the condition of your unit

6 Why is it important to know the tire depths?

Tires can be the most expensive maintenance item on a trailer. Depending on the tire, the tread depths can be quite different. A highway tire normally has a shallower depth than an off-road tire because of the application. However, despite the difference in depth, these tires can have the same amount of kilometers.

7 What is the Reefer HRS?

Some reefer unit manufacturers offer extended warranty on their units depending on the engine hours. HRS is the number of hours the refrigerator has been running. If you have a trailer full of ice cream, you'll want the temperature to be around -7C. Once it starts to warm up, the compressor will kick in again and cool it back down again.

8 How long can a compressor run before it needs to be replaced?

Typically, a unit runs 1,200 to 1,500 hours per year. If the trailer is on the road for five years, it should have around 7,500 hours on it.

Compressor replacement depends on how well it has been maintained. It could be after 20,000 hours if it has had poor maintenance and 50,000 for good maintenance. If a unit has less than 5,000 hours on it, you can usually still apply for extended warranty.

9 Should I ask if the reefer unit has been serviced?

Yes. It's a good idea to get the latest reefer service report to know the working condition of the cooling unit. Buying a reefer unit is different than any other trailer. You want a service report for the box itself and the cooler unit at the front. It should be a red flag if the cooling unit has not been serviced within the last year.





Specific deliveries require specific door types

10 Does the reefer unit model year match that of the trailer?

With different emission laws across Canada and the U.S., it's important to make sure the cooling unit can be used wherever you need to go.

This year, reefer units 2007 and older can't be on the road. If you're buying a 2010 trailer that has an old reefer unit on the front, you might not be able to take it into California, where a lot of produce comes from. Emission laws are only going to get more extensive. A new reefer unit could cost up to \$25,000.

11 Does it matter whether the rear opening has swing or roll-up doors?

Yes. It's important to get the right type of rear opening for the type of deliveries you've got. If you're using loading docks, you can have swing doors because there's room. But if you're going down a back alley to deliver food to a 7-Eleven, there will be less room so you'll probably need a roll-up door. It's all about knowing your business. Having the wrong doors could make the job more difficult or impossible. You might have to bring the trailer back to get what you need.

12 Does it matter what type of floor the trailer has?

Yes. You can have a duct floor or a flat floor. Tightly-packed loads, such as drinks or meat, benefit greatly from the duct floor for the increased airflow. That kind of floor is good when you're loading and unloading a maximum of once a day. Flat floors are more for city delivery where drivers are going in and out of the trailer more often.

13 Does how I secure the cargo on my deck impact the kind of floor I should get?

Yes. Aluminum floors have wooden strips in between for nailing down freight. If you're weight conscious, you want aluminum floors. With wood floors, it's cheaper to maintain or replace wood planks.

If you're a regular hauler who is hard on equipment, you should probably get a wood floor. You can just replace the wood planks as you need them.





**The heavier the cargo
you are hauling
the stronger the floor
you will need**

14 What if I'm carrying cargo that could spill?

If you have an environmentally safe trailer, you might have chemicals, which you can't have soaking into the wood. If you have an aluminum floor, it's easier to hose it down and maintain.

15 How thick a floor do I need?

It all depends on what you're hauling but the thickness of the floor or type of steel in the floor can greatly extend the life of an end dump trailer.

If you're hauling sand or gravel, that's not too hard on the floor. But if you're hauling cement blocks or big rocks in the mines, it can be hard on the floor. The harder the cargo you're hauling, the thicker the floor you want and the harder the steel. On the flipside, doing so increases costs.

16 Should I get steel or aluminum wheels?

This is another balancing act. Aluminum wheels look nice and stay shiny for a long time and save weight but they're more expensive. Steel wheels are heavier and are susceptible to corrosion but they're significantly cheaper. Do you want the cost up front or over time? The replacement costs are \$300 per aluminum wheel and \$100 per steel wheel.

17 Should I buy a trailer with air ride or spring ride?

It depends on what you want and can afford. The air ride option offers a smoother ride, but it can be costly to repair or replace. It's just what it sounds like, a bag full of air. Instead of the spring that goes up and down, the air bag goes up and down. Air rides are more expensive. For a tandem unit, it costs about \$5,000 for an air ride while the spring ride is about \$2,000.





**Try to find a seller
that can be your
business partner**

18 Why does the length of the trailer matter?

You should make sure you're purchasing the right length of trailer for the job you're doing. A few feet can make a big difference when you're trying to maneuver in tight places.

Trailers come in all kinds of lengths. A reefer van can be as short as 28 feet and as long as 53 feet.

19 What's the bottom line price-wise?

Just like buying a car, buying a used trailer is a negotiation. You want to buy a trailer that helps your business to be successful. It's an asset and you will want to maximize that asset. Try to find a trailer seller that can be your business partner.

20 Why is there a freight charge for used trailers?

If the trailer you're looking for is not available in your city, there's a good chance it can be found somewhere else. There will be a cost associated with moving the equipment to its final destination. If the advertisement says, "Selling price \$20,000 FOB Calgary," it means it's in Calgary and you'll pay \$20,000. But if you're in Saskatoon, it will have to be moved there. The charge to do that could be \$800.



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