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Hot to Pick the Right Used Generator by Sandra Vaughn

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While buying a used generator can prove to be about 20-50% more cost effective than a new one, finding the right one can be difficult. This guide provides information on finding the best generator for your needs.

Know what you need

Are you buying a genset for your RV, house or business? The answer to this question will tell you if need a portable or a standby used generator.

The next thing to take into account is the size of the engine. It's better to trust a certified and experienced electrician with this task- such a specialist will have all the necessary knowledge and equipment to calculate your wattage needs. If you want to do it on your own, begin with making a list of all the appliances you'll want to keep switched on. Check their nameplates and user manuals to find the running and start up requirements. Keep in mind that devices with a lot of dynamic parts- air conditioners, pumps, etc. - consume 3-5 times more energy when starting, than they do while running. To make sure you get a big enough used generator, add up all the operational and the highest start up value. Put in another 20% to leave yourself some "free space" in case you later include more items to the list.

You can still have plenty of functions

Don't give up on the desired features, just because you're buying a used generator. Second hand units offer just as much diversity as new ones do, so you won't have to miss on anything.

A transfer switch for example is definitely not something you want to skip. It prevents the motor from back feeding the circuits and thus electrocuting you, a member of your family or an unlucky utility worker. If it's an automatic it will also switch the used generator on and off when necessary and provide an uninterrupted power supply.

The automatic safety shutdown function will prevent a possible malfunction, fire or explosion by turning the engine off in case dangerous working conditions are detected. Such include low oil and coolant levels, high pressure in the lines or high working temperature.

Circuit breakers and automatic voltage regulation will protect your wiring and appliances from power overflow or fluctuations. Both of these are known to add to the wear and tear of the devices, as well as even totaling an appliance if it has no inbuilt defense.

Mind the noise. Hearing damage is known to occur at 78 decibels, yet there are units that work at 75-100. When choosing your used generator, try to go for 65 decibels or less.

Where to buy a used generator?

Get in touch with the manufacturers- they often offer refurbished and reconditioned units at 20-50% off the cost of new ones.

There's a good chance you'll find the used generator you want online. The internet is full of stores that as a rule offer prices significantly lower than those of your local dealer and provide great customer service by offering consultations and delivery without being too pushy.

Check out the used appliances shops. As with any other piece of electronics, a large number of working gensets end up there and are sold at pretty attractive prices.

What precautions to take when purchasing a used generator?

First thing's first- don't skip the warranty. Sooner or later everything breaks, but with second hand appliances it might be harder or more expensive to get the necessary spare parts and repairs. An adequate policy could save you a lot of money in that department.

Ask for the history of the motor? Has been used as a primary source of power, or as a standby in case of a blackout? This information is not always available, but when it is, it helps you get a general idea of the condition of the unit. You can at least check the odometer and see how many hours the device has worked.

If you're not buying online, inspect the used generator thoroughly. Don't be afraid to bring an electrician along to do that for you- after all, this is an important purchase. Examine the bolts and belts- are they too loose or too tight, can you see fraying, are there any visible leaks on the hoses, are there cracks and dents on the enclosure, are the filters filled with dirt and debris. If the answer to any of these is â€œyesâ€•, you might want to just turn around and walk away.

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