



Used Car Checklist

This is a summarised version of our in-depth article on what to check when buying a used car. Print this version, take it with you, and check things off as you go.

Be sure to read the full article before you go: thecarinvestor.com/used-car-buying-checklist

Exterior

Walk around the car and assess it externally

- Does the bodywork have any dents, chips or ripples?
- Are there any unusually large gaps between panels?
- Is there any rust? Check the following places:
 - Under the doors and inside the door frames
 - In the wheel wells and around the arches
 - Around the windshield and window seals
 - Open the trunk and check the hinges, and under the carpet
- Does the windshield have any chips or cracks?
- Is there enough tread left on the tires?
- Check that tires are worn evenly from one sidewall to the other
- Check the tires all the same brand (Check the spare too).
- Do the lights have any chips or cracks?
- Take a few steps back to check if the car is sitting level.
- Push down on each corner to check the shock absorbers. The car should only bounce once.
- Grab each tire one at a time and pull it towards you - listen out for any clunking noises

Engine Bay

Examine under the hood whilst the engine is switched off

- Does it look clean and well maintained?
- Use the dipstick to check the oil - it should be dark or light brown in color, and not gritty.
- Check there is no mayonnaise-like substance under the oil filler cap.
- Check the power-steering and brake fluids are between the min and max markers.
- Run your hand over the drive belts to check for any damage.
- Feel the hoses leading to the radiator and other areas to check the rubber isn't solid.
- Are the hoses clean and free from white staining?
- Check the coolant level is between the min and max markers.
- If the engine is cold, open the coolant cap and check the coolant isn't rusty or milky colored.
- Check around the battery terminals for signs of rust (sometimes batteries are located in the trunk).
- Check the battery's charge if you have a multimeter - fully charged batteries should be at 12.6v or above.

Interior

Sit in the driver's seat and get a feel for the car's interior

- Does the upholstery have any tears, stains, or general signs of wear?
- Does it smell inside of smoke, pets, or damp?
- Are there any signs of rust when you lift the mats?
- Turn the ignition key but don't start the ignition. Check all buttons and switches are working.
- Is the headliner (fabric attached to the roof) sagging?

Underneath

Get down low and check out the underside of the car

- Use a flashlight to check all components for signs of damage, rust or welding.
- Check the floor where the car is parked for any signs of leaks.
- Examine the tailpipe for signs of rust. If it's cold, feel for residue that could indicate the car is burning oil.
- Check underneath the front of the vehicle for scrapes and other damage to the bumper (important for low cars).
- Look for signs of damage under the rocker-panels (sills).

See next page for test drive checklist and questions to ask the seller



Used Car Test Drive Checklist

You can always check our in-depth article if you get stuck with anything in this checklist.
thecarinvestor.com/used-car-buying-checklist

Test Drive (Part 1)

Take the used car out for a spin to see how it drives

Before setting off

- Check the temperature gauge to see if the seller has been warming the engine beforehand.
- Check the engine starts well from cold.
- Check the engine starts well from warm.

Once out on the road

- Check the clutch for unusual noises, smells, or slippage. The car should pull away cleanly every time.
 - Ensure the gears select cleanly with no crunching or grinding (and all changes are smooth with no delay if you're test driving an automatic).
 - Power steering should be easy to operate with no unusual noises.
 - Check the car is tracking correctly.
- There should be no vibrations through the wheel as you're driving.

Test Drive (Part 2)

- Does the steering wheel sit off centre when driving straight?
- Take your hands off the wheel (only if safe to do so) and see if the car pulls to one side.
- Test the brakes by pushing hard on the pedal (only if safe to do so). Are there any:
 - Vibrations?
 - Grinding noises?
 - Does the car pull to one side?
 - Are the brakes responsive?
- Park on a slope and put the car in neutral to test the hand brake. The car should not move once engaged.
- Is the engine running smoothly, or sounding rough?
- When parked safely with the engine running, get out and check under the hood for any unusual sounds.
- Is the car comfortable enough for you?
- Does the car have enough power for you?
- Did anything irritate you?

Questions to ask the Seller

Why are you selling the car?

Can I see the paperwork?

Have there been any modifications?

How many previous owners has it had?

Where has the vehicle been kept?

Has it been damaged in the past?

Are there any issues that weren't mentioned in the description?

Notes: