

## Used Car Inspection Checklist From FixMyOldRide.com Where Old Cars Rule.

### Important Paper Work

- Original factory issued owner manuals.
- Are the repair and maintenance records available?
- Private seller has title and registration with matching vehicle Identification numbers.

### Inspect the Outside of the Automobile

- Check windshield for rock chips (stars) and cracks.
- Do the body panel colors match? Check for overspray on weather stripping.
- Will a magnet stick to the surface of suspicious looking steel body panels? Use a strong magnet and a piece of paper to protect the paint finish.
- Is this a new paint finish? If yes, it could be trouble down the road.
- Inspect the factory body seams and check the trunk and hood for alignment.
- Are the body lines for the doors and fenders properly aligned?
- Note scratches, dings and dents.
- Fog, backup lamps, headlights, brake lights and turn signals in working order.

### Detailed Interior Inspection Process

- Inspect the driver's seat condition, brake pedal pad and carpet wear near the gas pedal. These high wear areas should be consistent with the odometer reading.
- Trunk, hood and doors open and close properly.
- No heavy scent of air freshener. This might indicate a water leak or flood damage.
- Key on engine off dashboard bulb check lights and gauges work.
- No warning lights remain on after engine start (Example: check engine light).
- Entertainment, navigation and stereo systems work.
- Heat works from floor vent position with the engine at operating temperature.
- Car air conditioner blows cool air at 55 degrees or less from the center vent.
- Windshield wipers and time delay function operate as intended.
- Windshield washer fluid dispenses properly.
- Verify all seats equipped with functioning seat belts. Verify the air bag light works.
- Make sure all power and manual seats adjust properly.
- Check power windows operate from all switches not just the master switch.
- Verify the sunroof opens and closes properly and check for signs of water leaks.
- Doors and trunk locks and unlocks with keys and remote release switches.

- Hazard lights function properly.
- Turn signals and headlights, including high beams, work.

### **Checking all Four Tires and the Emergency Spare**

- Tires are all of the same make and model. Make sure they match the factory size and speed rating found on the driver side door jamb label.
- Tires have no sidewall bubbles or cracks and have at least 4/32 of tread depth.
- Tread flat and worn evenly? Wear could mean alignment and suspension problems.
- Spare tire, jack and correct lug wrench with the car and fully functional.
- Is the Spare tire fully inflated? Emergency spares are often inflated to 60 PSI.

### **Engine Compartment Inspection**

- Check for proper fluid levels and then for automotive fluids or oil leaking.
- Inspect the oil filler neck and the underside of the fill cap for thick milky deposits.
- Battery terminals free of corrosion. Check the date of the battery installation.
- Look at the oil dip stick for thick dark oil.
- Listen for unusual noise or odors while the engine is running.
- Check exhaust emissions are not blue or heavy white smoke.

### **Road Test for Automatic Transmission Issues**

- First look at the automatic transmission fluid on the dipstick (if applicable). Does it look clean, not dirty or feel gritty? Hold it up to the light; does it have metal particles suspended in the fluid? This might indicate a possible internal transmission problem.
- On the road test look for transmission slippage or flair up (slip) between shifts. Check for delays when shifting into drive or reverse. This could indicate worn internal seals or low pump pressure. Clunk noise when shifting could be broken powertrain mounts.

### **Clutch and Manual Transmission Inspection**

- Check clutch engagement for smooth take off and signs of a worn clutch (late engagement). Chatter when letting out the clutch can signal a rear main seal leak. Make sure each gear shifts smoothly and not noisier than the other gears while driving.
- Listen for throw out bearing noise. Check with the car in neutral while engaging and releasing the pedal (should sound the same). Don't forget to check the reverse gear.

### **Inspection for Car Steering and Suspension Problems**

- Inspect the vehicle ride height. Compare measurements from the center of each wheel well. Different measurements from left to right could indicate sagging or worn springs.
- Try a rebound test by pushing down on the automobile in each corner. It should rise and then settle. Make sure there are no creaking noises (bushing or ball joint problems).
- Do all four corners respond the same way when bouncing?
- Road test the car to check for drifting to one side (alignment issues). Check for low speed wobble in the steering wheel that could indicate a bent rim or tire problem.
- At highway speeds is the automobile stable and responsive? Check for shaking or vibration at highway speeds (wheel balance).
- No noise in the steering wheel when turning the vehicle at low speeds.
- No clicking or clunking when moving the vehicle from a stop with the wheels turned. This checks the CV joints.

### **Braking System Inspection**

- Does the vehicle stay generally straight when applying the brakes? If it pulls to one side or the other there could be a brake caliper issue.
- Check that the parking brake engages and holds the vehicle firmly. Also make sure it disengages properly and doesn't drag after releasing.
- On a road test be on the lookout for squealing or grinding noises when applying the brakes. Also verify no pulsation from the brake pedal when stopping.
- If possible shine a flashlight through the wheels and use an inspection mirror to see how much brake pad remains. Also look for disc rotor problems. Bluish or purple glazed rotors could indicate caliper problems or driver abuse from extreme braking maneuvers.

### **Full Frame and Sub Frame Inspections**

- Check under the hood for front collision damage. Look for signs of repair and repainting including overspray on engine system components. Look for unpainted bolts on fenders and welds that look different than the clean factory welds.
- Look for signs of crumpling, distortion or straightening inside the trunk and under the hood. Keep an eye out for areas of seam sealer without factory paint.
- Inspect the front and rear bumpers, mounting holes and hardware for collision damage. Pay particular attention to where they attach at the frame or sub frame.