

Used car checklist

Make and model:			
Year of manufacture:			
Date first registered in NZ:			
Odometer:			
Price:			
Seller's address:			
Seller's phone:			
Date inspected:			

Paperwork

Valid warrant of fitness

A vehicle sold by a dealer must have a warrant of fitness less than one month old. Private sellers can sell without a warrant, provided the car is clearly identified for sale "as is where is".

□ Consumer information notice (CIN)

A dealer (but not a private seller) is required to attach a CIN to every motor vehicle for sale and you must be given a copy if you buy the car.

□ No outstanding debts

If you buy privately, your car could be repossessed if there are any outstanding debts on it. Use a vehicle history checking service, such as CarJam, to find if the car is debt-free. A registered motor vehicle dealer must disclose any security interest on it for outstanding finance payments.

□ Confirmed ownership

The certificate of registration lists the current registered owner of the car. This should be the company or person – either dealer or private – you're buying the car from. If you're in any doubt, check with the police.

Sale agreement

If you're buying from a dealer, it must provide you with a written sale agreement that you've signed. Don't sign an agreement until you've read and understood all the clauses.

□ Finance

With any loan offer, check the time to repay, the monthly payments and the total cost over the term of the loan. All lending organisations must provide this information to allow you to compare deals. If the dealer offers an interest-free loan, check there aren't any hidden fees and that the asking price of the car hasn't been inflated to cover it.

- The car itself is only half the story. You need to **check the paperwork**, to make sure the car is the car you think it is.
- If at all possible, **view and drive** the car before purchase. Take someone with you to help.
- For about \$120, it's a good idea to pay a specialist inspection service or a mechanic to do a detailed **mechanical inspection**, especially if your test drive highlights possible problems.
- Before you buy, **check the price** is right. Search for similar cars on Trade Me or Autotrader. For \$20, Redbook will provide the market value of the make and model.



If you see signs of trouble,
walk away – there are plenty
more cars to choose from.

If you're dead set on this car, get
an expert mechanical inspection
to investigate further – then be
prepared to walk away.

AFTER THE PURCHASE: change of ownership

Both the buyer and the seller have to fill out forms available from an NZ Transport Agency's (NZTA) agent (such as New Zealand Post) or use the NZTA online transaction centre. The buyer pays the fee and is ultimately responsible for the changeover.

View and drive checklist

Follow the checklist steps in order. You want the car "cold" when you arrive - a warm car masks many ills.

OUTSIDE THE CAR

- ☐ Is the car clean and well-presented?
- Look for rust holes or paint bubbles (especially door bottoms behind the rubber seals, wheel arches, around the petrol cover, boot and windows.)
- Check for colour variations in the paintwork, uneven panel gaps or ripples and bumps in panels (signs of accident damage).
- Check the doors, boot and bonnet open and shut properly, lock and unlock.
- □ Look for damaged or cracked glass.
- Check the tyre tread it's illegal if less than 1.5mm deep over 75% of the tread width, but that's the absolute minimum. Look out for snow tyres - these must have a minimum of 4mm tread.
- Look for tyres worn unevenly (a sign of wheel misalignment).
- Tyres on each axle should be the same brand and model. All tyres must be the same size.
- Check there's a spare tyre (if the car should have one) and it's in good condition (it doesn't have to be to pass a WOF). Also make sure there's a jack and wheel brace in the boot.
- □ Check under the car for patches of underseal or rust.
- □ Look for fluid leaks under the vehicle.

INSIDE THE CAR

- ☐ Check the interior is big enough for your needs.
- ☐ Make sure seats and controls can be adjusted to suit.
- All seatbelts must work and can't be frayed or badly faded
- □ Does the interior's condition look appropriate for the car's age and kilometres of use?
- ☐ Check all controls and equipment work properly (power windows and mirrors, indicators, wipers, lights, locks, gauges and warning lights, heater, air conditioning, stereo etc).
- □ Sniff for dampness and check the carpet for moisture.
- ☐ Sniff for a cigarette smell (this can be hard to get rid of).

UNDER THE BONNET

- Check the oil level on the dipstick (low oil could mean a worn engine, a leak, or poor maintenance).
- ☐ Creamy or milky oil indicates water in the oil, and a potentially expensive repair.
- Check the radiator for rusty water and rusted or crumbly radiator fins.
- ☐ Look for any leaks of water, oil or petrol.
- Check the levels of other fluids, such as brake fluid or power steering fluid.
- □ Look for corrosion, especially around the battery terminals and surrounding bodywork.
- Check for signs of accident repair, such as new welds or mismatched paint.

BEFORE DRIVING AWAY

☐ Check the engine starts easily when cold. Listen for odd noises when idling.

- Make sure no warning lights stay lit once the engine has started.
- Rev the engine. You shouldn't see lots of black or blue smoke from the exhaust.
- ☐ Have someone hold a damp rag over the exhaust and rev the engine. Spluttering noises indicate holes.
- ☐ The car shouldn't "crab" and the wheels shouldn't wobble (get someone to check as you drive away).

ON THE TEST DRIVE

The test drive should take at least half an hour. Include a mix of road conditions and speeds. Listen for odd noises, be alert to weird vibrations or shudders, and sniff for oil or petrol.

- Assess if the controls suit you and are easy to move.
- ☐ The steering wheel shouldn't feel "loose" when driving in a straight line and should be centred.
- Relax your grip on the wheel on a level road the car shouldn't pull to one side.
- Make sure the brakes aren't weak, the pedal doesn't go right to the floor and that the vehicle stops in a straight line (test by braking hard on a smooth even road surface - with no following traffic).
- ☐ Check the handbrake holds the car on a steep hill.
- Check the gears change smoothly. In a manual car, does the clutch slip or not release properly when engaging gears?
- ☐ Is the ride comfortable on rough roads? Speed bumps are a good place to check for worn shock absorbers and suspension the car shouldn't bounce excessively and there should be no odd noises.
- Look for overheating or warning lights on the dashboard.

AFTER THE TEST DRIVE

- Does the engine shut off immediately, then restart easily?
- Look underneath for oil leaks they often show up when the engine is warm.

Notes

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