

# Vehicle buying checklist

Private sellers are not bound to the strict regulations dealerships must abide by. That's why it's important to be punctilious when inspecting a used car. Here's what you should bring with you to a vehicle inspection:

- A notebook and pen.
- Paper towels to check engine oil.
- A small flashlight under-car leak and corrosion inspections
- A small magnet to detect concealed body work
- A printed copy of this vehicle history report.
- The following checklist:

## General Questions

- Record the vehicle identification number, mileage and asking price.
- Has the seller taken brand & title issues from the vehicle history report into consideration in their asking price?
- Is the car still under manufacturer warranty?
- Does the vehicle appear to have been well maintained?
- When should you schedule the next regular service?

## **Exterior**

- Windshield is free of cracks
- Magnet adheres to all steel body panels
- Fresh paint job (if yes, it could be to conceal rust)
- Seams where the trunk and hood close are properly aligned
- Seams where doors and fenders meet are properly aligned
- Free of body scratches
- Free of body dents
- Windshields wipers and blades are fully functional
- Headlights and directional lights intact and fully functional

## **Tires**

- Tires are a reputable brand name (Michelin, Bridgestone, Goodyear)
- Tires are all of the same make
- Tires are free of any cuts, bubbles or cracks

- Tread worn evenly (uneven wear indicates alignment and suspension problems)
- Spare tire, jack and lug wrench on car and fully functional
- Spare tire inflated

## **Engine**

- Free of fluid or oil leaks
- Oil filler neck not coated with thick, black deposits
- Battery terminals free of corrosion
- Oil dip stick free of dark, black oil
- Free of odors while engine is running
- Exhaust pipe emissions are neither blue (indicates engine burns oil) or black (indicate excessive oil consumption)

## **Suspension**

- Vehicle rests levelly
- When bouncing the vehicle's corners, no creaking noises are made
- All corners respond the same when bouncing

## **Interior**

- Seats unworn and free of cracks
- All doors open and close freely
- Trunk opens and closes freely
- Lacks a heavy scent of air freshener (may indicate something is being concealed)
- All gauges work
- No dashboard warning lights remain illuminated

## **Heater works**

- Air conditioner works
- Windshield wipers work
- Windshield wiper fluid dispenses properly
- All seats equipped with functional seat belts
- All seats adjust properly
- Power windows operate properly
- Sunroof opens and closes properly (if applicable)

- Car alarm works (if applicable)
- Trunk and driver-side door lock and unlock with key
- Hazard lights function properly
- Headlights, including brights, work properly

## **Frame**

- Chassis is neither bent nor cracked
- No signs of crumpling or straightening inside the trunk
- Frame holes just inside outer edge clean and free of scratches

## **Automatic Transmission**

- Transmission fluid looks clean, not dirty or gritty (no indicates possible internal transmission problem)
- Transmission neither slips nor delays when driving

## **Manual or Standard Transmission**

- Each gear shifts smoothly
- No grinding noises when in reverse

## **Brakes**

- Vehicle steers straight and does not pull to one side when applying brakes
- Parking brake engages and disengages freely
- No grinding noises when applying
- Wheels do not lock when applying antilock brakes (if applicable)

## **Steering**

- Vehicle does not drift to one side without prodding
- Vehicle is stable; no shaking or vibrating
- No resistance in the steering wheel when turning
- No clicking or clunking when turning

## **Miscellaneous**

- Car manual located in the glove compartment
- Instructions included for any accessories

- Service and repair records available
- Owner has title.