



## USED VEHICLE PRE-PURCHASE INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Because private sellers are not bound to the same strict oversight as dealerships, you, to protect yourself, must be meticulous when inspecting a used car of interest. To help you determine if the vehicle is worthy of buying, bring the following items with you for inspecting the vehicle:

- A notebook & pen for taking notes & recording the VIN, mileage & asking price
- Paper towels for checking the engine oil
- A small flashlight for looking under the car for leaks and corrosion
- A small magnet for detecting concealed body work
- A CD for testing the car stereo
- Inspection checklist (detailed below)
- If possible, an [auto history report](#)

With these tools in hand, run down the following checklist. To make sure you hit everything, print this page and take it with you when conducting your inspection.

### Exterior

- Windshield free of cracks
- Body panel colors match
- 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 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
- Stereo works

- 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 high-beams, 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)

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## 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](#)

## Other Insights

If the seller objects to your inspection WALK AWAY, they're likely trying to hide something!

If the majority of this checklist is satisfactory to you and you want to proceed to the next step notify the seller you'd like to have your mechanic assess the vehicle.

Again, if they object...WALK!

Once the vehicle has been inspected by us you have the information you need to make an informed decision. Use the flaws found during your initial inspection and the mechanic inspection to negotiate the sale price to a fair value or walk away if they're too substantial.

### **Kirkpatrick's Auto & Repair, LLC**

82 Cony Rd. Augusta, ME 04330

207-622-1557

[KirkpatrickService.com](http://KirkpatrickService.com)