

Vehicle Purchase Checklist

<i>Buyer name</i>		<i>Seller name</i>	
<i>Today's date</i>		<i>VIN# last 4</i>	
<i>Year, make, model</i>		<i>Mileage</i>	

Document Inspection:

- Clear Carfax or VinCheck report
- Signed Title in seller's name with correct VIN#
 - Signed by ALL owners; any liens signed off; if dated, less than 2 weeks old
- Signed 130-U

Document Notes:

Vehicle Static Inspection:

Interior

- No smell of mold or mildew
- No sign of sand or dirt or water intrusion under carpets or in jams
- All windows work
- All doors open, close, and lock correctly
- Overall interior carpet, seat, dash condition is decent
- Climate control: both AC and heat work on all settings, no bad odors from system
- Lighting: headlights, brake lights, turn signals, interior lights work
- Radio: works properly
- Windshield wipers and washers work correctly
- Seats and mirrors work correctly – test all power seat controls for proper function

Interior Notes:

Exterior

- Tires: less than 5 years old, good tread, free of cracks, no abnormal tire wear across the tires
- Spare tire and tools present
- Chassis: all panels appear original, free of rust or significant damage
- Windshield free of major cracks
- Rubber seals and trim in reasonable condition
- Panel gaps and seams along hood, trunk, doors, fenders are consistent and line up correctly

Exterior Notes:

Engine Bay

- Dipstick: oil at proper level and consistency
- Radiator and expansion tank: proper level and clean fluid free of stop-leak or rust
- Power-steering fluid and brake fluid: proper level
- Battery: corrosion free and less than 4 years old
- Top of engine bay free of leaks

Engine Bay Notes:

Undercarriage – use a flashlight and look under the vehicle from all sides

- Underneath engine, transmission, and differential free of wet leaks
- Undercarriage free of major rust (check both sides, front, back)
- Undercarriage free of accident damage (check both sides, front, back)

Undercarriage Notes:

Codes

- No dash warning lights illuminated
- OBD2: list any stored codes _____

Vehicle Test Drive:

- Cold start: starts easily, idles well, free of smoke or misfire
- Passes WOT test (notes on next page)
- Passes Alignment test (notes on next page)
- Passes Engine Mount test (noted on next page)
- Transmission: upshifts and downshift smoothly in all gears; reverse works correctly
- Engine: revs freely without knocking, accelerates under load appropriately, does not overheat or trigger any CEL's or warning lights
- Brakes: strong and quite under both low and high speed and load
- Steering: tight, aligned, no binding or shaking at parking lot speeds or at highway speeds
- Suspension: appropriately absorbent of bumps, no loud noises or knocks
- Odors: no smell of smoke, exhaust, or gasoline in cabin
- Hubs and axles: no sound of clicking or knocking when driving the vehicle straight or turning

Test Drive Notes:

Final Steps During Purchase

1. Remove toll tag
2. Encourage seller to remove any personal documents from glove box, such as insurance cards
3. Get ALL keys to the vehicle
4. Ask for ALL maintenance records
 - This is especially important if the vehicle was ever in an accident – get repair records
 - If the engine uses a timing belt rather than chain, find out if and when it was last replaced.
 - If the vehicle has more than 100k miles, find out if it has had a recent engine tune-up, and if so, when.

Static Inspection Notes:

- Most modern vehicles have the VIN# stamped on all major body panels and doors. If you can find these stamps or stickers, confirm they match the vehicle VIN#. If not, it means the part was replaced, likely due to accident damage. Talk to the seller for accident and repair details if this is the case.
- Check the wheels for locking lug nuts. If present, ensure the seller includes the correct keyed socket to remove the lugs.
- When checking for codes on an OBD scanner, make sure all OBD monitors have run and passed. If they say “incomplete” this means the ECM has been reset and/or codes have been cleared. That is a strong indicator the seller is trying to hide a fault.
- When you first start the car, the airbag light MUST illuminate for approximately 7 seconds. If it does not, there is likely something wrong with the airbag system and you should walk away.
- Power seats failing to operate can be expensive to repair depending on the model. These types of parts are becoming widely unavailable in today's market.
- AC systems should cool the car in a reasonable amount of time. Ideally, bring a thermometer and test the air temperature coming out of the vent after the AC has been running for a few minutes. Ideal temperatures are 57 degrees or below. Above that indicates a potential problem with the AC.
- Climate control systems are complex and can be expensive to repair. Check all climate control “modes” for both AC and heat. This includes floor vents, front vents, and windshield vents. Does the air go where directed? Does the fan run quietly on all fan settings? Note any popping or strange noises from under the dash. Finally, if the vehicle has split climate controls (separate temperature settings for driver and passenger), check to make sure the system can run full hot on one side while full cold on the other, and then vice-versa.

Test Drive Notes:

- **WOT test:** Always perform a 15-20 mph wide-open throttle (WOT) test
 - o Get to a roadway where you can safely perform this test
 - o Accelerate at full throttle from 15-20 mph.
 - o Did the transmission downshift with crisp engagement?
 - o Did the engine immediately begin building power and accelerate quickly?
 - o Hold WOT until the next gear change, did the transmission shift crisply under high load or did it struggle?
 - o Any strange sounds from the engine or drivetrain?
- **Alignment test:** Steering alignment test
 - o Find a flat roadway surface where you can safely drive at least 40 mph (not a road with a lot of crown or sloping to the side)
 - o Accelerate to at least 40 mph in a straight line and briefly release the wheel. Does the vehicle drive straight when the wheel is correctly centered, or does it pull to one side or the other? Is the wheel properly centered?
- **Engine mount test**
 - o Put the vehicle in Drive, but hold the brake FIRMLY. Press the accelerator partway while still holding the brake (called "power braking").
 - o Does the engine feel like it is being held down, or is it jumping around?
 - o Repeat the procedure with the vehicle in Reverse.
 - o You can do this test with the hood open and have someone watch the engine to ensure that it does not move substantially (small movement is normal, large is not)