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Used Car Inspection Checklist

A do-it-yourself checklist for Queensland buyers · 110 points · 7 stages

Not an InspectCar inspection report

Date: **Seller:** **Phone:**

Make and model: **VIN:** **Odometer:** km

Registration: **Asking price: $** **Location:**

Stop rule: three serious red flags at any stage and you walk away, whatever the price. Inspect in daylight, on a cold engine, and don't let the seller rush you.

1. Paperwork and history — 14 points

- [ ] 1 Seller's photo ID matches the name on the registration certificate
- [ ] 2 Registration is current (check the expiry date)
- [ ] 3 VIN on the registration certificate matches the car's VIN plate
- [ ] 4 VIN plate shows no sign of tampering
- [ ] 5 Number plates match the registration certificate
- [ ] 6 Engine number matches the papers (where listed)
- [ ] 7 Current Queensland safety certificate supplied
- [ ] 8 Certificate within 2 months or 2,000 km (private seller), or 3 months or 1,000 km (licensed dealer)
- [ ] 9 PPSR search: no money owing
- [ ] 10 PPSR search: no written-off record
- [ ] 11 PPSR search: not recorded as stolen
- [ ] 12 Service history: logbook stamps or receipts
- [ ] 13 Service dates and odometer readings add up
- [ ] 14 Recall work done (ask the seller)

2. Exterior and body — 18 points

- [ ] 1 Panel gaps even on both sides of the bonnet, doors and boot
- [ ] 2 Paint colour matches between panels in daylight
- [ ] 3 No orange-peel texture or overspray on seals, badges or trim
- [ ] 4 Magnet (in a cloth) sticks evenly on steel panels: no body filler
- [ ] 5 No rust at the wheel arches
- [ ] 6 No rust at the sills and door bottoms
- [ ] 7 No rust around the boot edges or windscreen surround
- [ ] 8 No hail dimples on the roof and bonnet (look from a low angle)
- [ ] 9 No faded clear coat or chalky paint
- [ ] 10 Windscreen free of chips and cracks
- [ ] 11 Glass markings match on every window
- [ ] 12 Headlights clear, no moisture inside
- [ ] 13 All exterior lights work, including the brake lights
- [ ] 14 Doors open, close and latch cleanly
- [ ] 15 Bonnet and boot open, close and latch cleanly
- [ ] 16 Rubber seals intact around the doors, boot and windows
- [ ] 17 Wipers and washers work
- [ ] 18 Tow bar: note any signs of heavy towing

3. Interior and electrics — 20 points

- [ ] 1 Wear on the steering wheel, pedals and seat matches the odometer
- [ ] 2 No musty smell or heavy air freshener
- [ ] 3 Carpets dry, no silt or water lines (flood signs)
- [ ] 4 No rust on the seat rails
- [ ] 5 Boot floor and spare-wheel well dry and free of rust
- [ ] 6 Warning lights come on at key-on and go out after start-up
- [ ] 7 Airbag light comes on and goes out normally
- [ ] 8 Seatbelts pull out fully, lock on a sharp tug and retract
- [ ] 9 Seats adjust and lock in place
- [ ] 10 Air conditioning blows cold within two minutes
- [ ] 11 Heater and demister work
- [ ] 12 Power windows go fully up and down
- [ ] 13 Central locking works from every key and remote
- [ ] 14 Number of keys supplied: _____
- [ ] 15 Mirrors adjust
- [ ] 16 Horn works
- [ ] 17 Gauges and odometer display work
- [ ] 18 Screen, Bluetooth, speakers and USB ports work
- [ ] 19 Reverse camera and parking sensors work
- [ ] 20 Headliner and trim free of stains or sagging

What to bring

- This checklist and a pen
- A torch for underneath and the engine bay
- A small fridge magnet wrapped in a cloth
- Paper towel for checking the fluids
- A helper to watch the lights and listen
- Your phone, for photos of the VIN, odometer and faults

4. Under the bonnet — 16 points

- [ ] 1 Bonnet cold: engine not started before you arrived
- [ ] 2 Oil level between the dipstick marks
- [ ] 3 Oil amber to dark brown, not milky or gritty
- [ ] 4 No milky film under the oil filler cap
- [ ] 5 Coolant at the right level, clean, no oily film (engine cold)
- [ ] 6 Brake fluid within the marks
- [ ] 7 Power steering fluid within the marks (if fitted)
- [ ] 8 Drive belts free of cracks and fraying
- [ ] 9 Hoses firm, no cracks, bulges or soft spots
- [ ] 10 No fresh oil leaks on the engine or gearbox
- [ ] 11 No fresh coolant leaks
- [ ] 12 Battery terminals clean, no corrosion
- [ ] 13 Timing belt replaced on schedule (if fitted)
- [ ] 14 Cold start: fires promptly, no long cranking
- [ ] 15 Smooth idle, no rattles, ticking or knocking
- [ ] 16 No blue or white smoke once running

5. Underneath, tyres and brakes — 14 points

- [ ] 1 Tread above the wear indicators on all four tyres
- [ ] 2 Even wear across each tyre
- [ ] 3 No sidewall cracks, cuts or bulges
- [ ] 4 Tyre date codes under about six years old
- [ ] 5 Matching tyre brands and sizes on each axle
- [ ] 6 Spare tyre, jack and wheel brace present and usable
- [ ] 7 Brake discs without deep grooves or a heavy lip
- [ ] 8 Brake pads with plenty of material left (where visible)
- [ ] 9 Each corner rebounds once and settles when pushed down
- [ ] 10 No heavy rust underneath (use a torch)
- [ ] 11 Chassis rails straight, no kinks
- [ ] 12 No fresh underseal in odd places
- [ ] 13 Exhaust intact, mounts secure
- [ ] 14 No drips on the ground under the car

6. Test drive — 18 points

- [ ] 1 Insurance cover for your drive confirmed with the seller
- [ ] 2 Drive of 20 to 30 minutes on mixed roads, radio off
- [ ] 3 Steering centred when driving straight
- [ ] 4 No pulling to one side
- [ ] 5 No vibration through the steering wheel at speed
- [ ] 6 Automatic: smooth shifts, no slips or flaring revs
- [ ] 7 Manual: clutch bites mid-pedal, gears select without grinding
- [ ] 8 Smooth acceleration, no hesitation
- [ ] 9 Brakes stop straight with a firm pedal
- [ ] 10 No pulsing or grinding when braking
- [ ] 11 Park brake holds on a hill
- [ ] 12 No clunks over bumps
- [ ] 13 No humming that rises with speed
- [ ] 14 No knocking under acceleration
- [ ] 15 Temperature gauge steady near the middle
- [ ] 16 No warning lights during the drive
- [ ] 17 4WD: 4H and 4L engage and the indicator lights show (if fitted)
- [ ] 18 After the drive: easy restart, no fresh drips underneath

7. Final checks before you pay — 10 points

- [ ] 1 Faults noted, and the price agreed in writing
- [ ] 2 PPSR search run again on the day you pay
- [ ] 3 Safety certificate still current on the day
- [ ] 4 Transfer application signed by you and the seller
- [ ] 5 Receipt: price, date, VIN, registration, both parties' details
- [ ] 6 All keys, the logbook and service records handed over
- [ ] 7 Paid by bank transfer, with the record kept
- [ ] 8 No deposit paid before the papers checked out
- [ ] 9 Insurance arranged from the moment of purchase
- [ ] 10 Registration transferred into your name within 14 days

Serious red flags found (three means walk away): ☐☐☐

Faults and notes

Asking price: $ **Cost of faults found: $** **Your offer: $**

Next step: ☐ Walk away ☐ Negotiate the price ☐ Book a professional inspection ☐ Buy