

Used Car Checklist

Checklist · 21 items · 7 sections

This used car checklist simplifies the buying process into clear steps: from researching the vehicle and negotiating the price to completing the paperwork. Use it alongside a mechanic inspection for the best protection.

Open the editable, AI-powered version online:

<https://genechecklist.com/checklist/used-car-checklist>

RESEARCH & BUDGET

- Set your budget: include insurance, registration, taxes, and repair reserve
HIGH
- Research reliability ratings for the make and model (Consumer Reports, JD Power)
HIGH
- Check fair market value on KBB, Edmunds, or CarGurus
HIGH
- Get pre-approved for a car loan before shopping

VEHICLE HISTORY

- Run a Carfax or AutoCheck vehicle history report
HIGH
- Check for accident history, salvage title, and flood damage
HIGH
- Verify the mileage matches the history report
HIGH
- Check number of previous owners and service history

PHYSICAL INSPECTION

- Inspect exterior for rust, paint mismatches, and panel gaps
HIGH
- Check engine oil, coolant, and brake fluid condition
HIGH
- Check tire tread depth and condition
HIGH
- Test all lights, windows, locks, A/C, heat, and electronics

HIGH

- Check for warning lights on dashboard when engine is running

HIGH

TEST DRIVE

- Take the car on a 15–20 minute test drive including highway driving

HIGH

- Listen for unusual noises when accelerating, braking, or turning

HIGH

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW

- Have an independent mechanic do a pre-purchase inspection (\$100–\$150)

HIGH

NEGOTIATION

- Negotiate price based on market value, condition, and any needed repairs

HIGH

PAPERWORK

- Review the bill of sale: verify VIN, price, and mileage are accurate

HIGH

- Verify title is clean (not salvage, rebuilt, or liened)

HIGH

- Transfer title and register the vehicle in your name within required timeframe

HIGH

- Purchase or transfer auto insurance before driving the vehicle

HIGH