

Vehicle Inspection Checklist

Checklist · 30 items · 11 sections

A complete vehicle safety inspection checklist. Use it before buying a used car, before a road trip, or for your regular safety checks. For used-car buying specifically the Used Car Inspection Checklist focuses on red flags. For regular upkeep see the Car Maintenance Checklist and the Car Service Checklist. Truck drivers: the Pre-Trip Inspection Checklist covers DOT requirements.

Open the editable, AI-powered version online:

<https://genechecklist.com/checklist/vehicle-inspection-checklist>

TIRES & WHEELS

- Tire tread depth: minimum 2/32" (use penny test: Lincoln's head = replace)
HIGH
- Tire pressure: check all 4 tires + spare (find PSI on door jamb sticker)
HIGH
- Tires: no cracks, bulges, or uneven wear patterns
HIGH
- Lug nuts: tight and no missing bolts
HIGH

BRAKES

- Brake pads: thickness adequate (min 3mm); no grinding noise when braking
HIGH
- Brake fluid level: between MIN and MAX marks
HIGH
- Brake rotors: no deep grooves or heavy rust
HIGH
- Parking brake: engages and holds vehicle on incline

FLUIDS

- Engine oil: level between MIN/MAX; color (dark = needs change; milky = head gasket issue)
HIGH
- Coolant/antifreeze: level adequate, no rust or debris
HIGH
- Transmission fluid: level OK (if accessible); no burnt smell

HIGH

- Power steering fluid: level adequate
- Windshield washer fluid: full

LIGHTS

- Headlights: both working (low and high beam)
HIGH
- Taillights and brake lights: working correctly
HIGH
- Turn signals (all four corners): working
HIGH
- Reverse lights and hazard lights: working

ELECTRONICS

- Dashboard warning lights: no check engine, ABS, TPMS, or airbag lights on
HIGH
Any lit warning light should be scanned with an OBD-II reader before purchase
- Battery: terminals clean (no white corrosion), charge adequate
HIGH

VISIBILITY

- Windshield wipers: no streaking or skipping
- Windshield: no cracks in driver's line of sight
HIGH
- All mirrors adjusted and intact

SAFETY

- Seatbelts: all buckle and latch correctly, no fraying
HIGH
- Airbag warning light off (if lit = airbag may not deploy in crash)
HIGH
- Horn working

ENGINE

- Exhaust: no unusual smoke; blue = oil burning, white = coolant leak
HIGH
- Under vehicle: no fluid puddles or leaks on ground
HIGH

COMFORT

- AC and heat: both function in their respective seasons

EMERGENCY PREP

- Emergency kit in trunk: jumper cables, flashlight, first aid kit, reflective triangle

DOCUMENTS

- Registration and insurance cards in glove box: current and valid

HIGH