



## The AA1Car Used Car Quick Inspection Check List Copyright 2008

### RULE #1 NEVER buy a vehicle without test driving it.

**RULE #2** If the vehicle does not start, idle or run well, don't believe the excuse that "it only needs a tune-up" If that's all it needed, it would have been fixed already.

Use the following check list as a guide to inspecting a used vehicle. Check off each item one-by-one. If an item does not pass, use it as a negotiating point to get a lower price.

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### **SAFETY:**

**Brakes** Step on pedal, should be firm & hold pressure. Soft pedal, low pedal or pedal that slowly sinks to floor indicates need for brake repairs. Test drive to see how brakes feel, sound. Pulling, grabbing or noise indicate need for brake repairs.

**Tires** Check all four tires (and spare) for wear. Uneven wear indicates misalignment and possible worn steering/suspension parts

**Steering** Test drive. If play in steering wheel, or steering feels loose or pulls to one side, indicates worn or damaged steering/suspension parts.

**Headlights** Turn headlights on and check low and high beams to make sure all lights work

**Taillights** With lights on, check that all taillights and marker lights work (including license plate light)

**Brake lights** Have helper step on brake pedal to see if all brake lights work

**Turn Signals** With key on or engine running, check right/left turn signals and 4-way flashers

**Wipers** Turn wipers on. Check intermittent, low and high speeds. Also washers.

**Horn** Push steering wheel to see if horn blows

**Defrosters** Turn heater/climate control to defrost. Check for air blowing out of defroster ducts. If vehicle has rear defroster, turn on, wait several minutes & feel glass to see if warm

**Airbag warning light** If this light is on, there is a fault in the air bag system. The vehicle may have been in a recent accident and may not have been properly repaired.

### **ENGINE, POWERTRAIN & UNDERHOOD:**

**Check Engine light** Turn ignition on. All warning lights should illuminate for a couple of seconds then go out. If Check Engine/Service Engine Soon light or icon remains on, engine has an emissions problem that will require further diagnosis & repair.

**Other Warning lights** All dash warning lights should come on when key is first turned on, then go out. Test drive vehicle until engine is warm to see if any lights come on. If ABS or Brake light comes on, it could indicate need for brake repairs (check to make sure parking brake is not on).

**Dipstick** Open hood and remove dipstick. Check oil level and appearance. If oil level is low, it could indicate neglect or an engine that is leaking or burning oil. If oil is black and very dirty, owner has not changed oil often enough (could shorten oil life).

**Test drive/Engine.** Does the engine start normally? Does it idle smoothly? Does the vehicle accelerate without hesitating or stalling? Does the engine run smoothly and have normal power?  
Any unusual noises (knocking, ticking sounds)? Hard starting, hesitation, stalling or misfiring can indicate need for expensive diagnosis and repairs. Noise usually indicates worn parts and a need for expensive repairs.

**Test drive/Transmission.** An automatic transmission should engage smoothly when placed in gear, and shift smoothly while driving. Any slippage between gears indicates expensive trouble. On vehicles with manual transmissions (stick shift), the clutch pedal should release/engage smoothly with normal pedal travel. Excessive pedal travel, slipping or chattering indicates clutch trouble. Gears should shift smoothly with no grinding.

**Visual Underhood Inspection** Inspect the engine for oil or coolant leaks, signs of recent repair, unusual or heavy accumulations of grease or dirt. Also, look for any service stickers that may indicate maintenance/repair history.

**Fluid levels** Look at coolant reservoir, windshield waster reservoir, brake reservoir, Power steering pump reservoir to see if fluid levels are full. Low levels could indicate neglect or a problem.

**Belts & Hoses** Inspect belts and hoses for cracks or leaks

**Battery** Inspect terminals and cables for corrosion, damage or recent repairs. Check to see if battery has a date code on it. If more than 5 years old, battery will soon have to be replaced.

## **BODY:**

**Body/paint damage** Walk all the way around the vehicle to look for obvious damage such as dents/dings, alignment of doors, hood and trunk to body, look down sides for ripples or bows, check wheel well openings/fenders/rocker panels for body filler, look for paint overspray on trim as evidence of recent body repairs. Body damage & repainting can be very expensive to repair.

**Plastic Bumpers** Look up under the front and rear bumpers for signs of damaged/cracked plastic indicating recent accident damage. Check for peeling/cracking paint from recent repairs.

**Windshield and glass** Check windshield for cracks, pits or scratches (can be expensive to replace).

**Doors** Open and close all doors/liftgate/hatchback to see that both exterior and interior release handles work properly. Also inspect weather stripping around doors for damage that could allow water leaks or annoying wind noise.

**Trunk** Does trunk release, open/shut normally? Does trunk smell damp or musty (could indicate water leakage or recent flood damage to vehicle). Where is the spare tire and jack?

## CONVENIENCE:

**Air Conditioner/Heater/Climate Control System** Check operation of A/C and heater. If A/C does not blow cold air, system is probably leaking refrigerant.

**Power Windows, door locks, seats** Test operation of all power windows, door locks and seats. If keyless entry, does key fob work properly? Does owner have keyless entry code?

**Radio, CD player** Turn on and check basic functions (volume, speaker fade, channel select). If the radio has a CD or cassette player, test it to see if it works.

**Navigation system, DVD player, other features** Test these devices to see if they work properly.

**Interior Visual** Inspect seats, door panels, carpeting and gas/brake/clutch pedals for unusual or heavy wear.

**Cigarette lighter/power receptacle(s)** Test to see if they work.

**Interior lights** Do the lights come on when any door is opened?

## PAPERWORK:

**License plates/registration** Does the vehicle have current plates/registration? If not, why not? Vehicle could have been rebuilt, flood damaged or from out of state (always suspicious).

**Title** Does seller have title? **ASK TO SEE IT.** Compare the VIN on the title to the VIN on the vehicle (usually located at the base of the windshield on driver's side). If VIN numbers on title/vehicle do not match, or there is no title, **DO NOT BUY THIS VEHICLE!**

**Receipts** If seller has maintenance/repair receipts and is claiming that work has been recently done, parts replaced, etc., car has been well maintained, ask for written proof.

**Sale Terms** Most used vehicles are sold "**AS IS**" which means if anything goes wrong with it after you buy it, so sad too bad. If the seller promises to take care of any problems or is offering you a warranty or guarantee of any kind **GET IT IN WRITING** and have the seller sign it.