

MOTORS

Buying a Used Car Checklist: The Ultimate Guide



Before visiting the vehicle:

Consider your budget

Review your expenses and set a realistic budget for any cars you're interested in buying. You may also want to consider financing the vehicle. If so, work out an affordable monthly payment, as this will help narrow your search.

Research Potential Vehicles

Once you've begun your search, it's worth researching any vehicles that stand out. Reading and watching expert reviews online will give you a better feel of the car's strengths and weaknesses. It's worth looking into potential lifestyle changes associated with certain vehicles too, particularly if you're considering a hybrid or electric car.

Ask about the documents

Once you've found some potential vehicles it's worth:

- Running a HPI Check to ensure the vehicle isn't stolen.
- Checking the vehicle's MOT certificate at gov.uk/check-mot-history.
- Completing a vehicle history check to help avoid scams and undisclosed information.
- Asking the seller about the relevant documents including the V5C, service history, and the vehicle's handbook.

Make a note of these details to refer back to later. At MOTORS we only work with dealerships and you should always view the vehicle at the dealer location. If you're looking to buy from a private seller, always meet at their home address.

Review the market

Before you head off to view the vehicle, be sure to shop around to ensure you're getting a fair deal. You should look for a price that reflects market value, and be suspicious of any vehicle that seems far too cheap. If you plan on selling your current vehicle, double-check any part-exchange valuations with Motors.co.uk - <https://www.motors.co.uk/sell-my-car/car-valuation/>



Remember: If a particular vehicle's advert looks too good to be true, it most likely is.

When viewing the vehicle:

Review the vehicle's condition

Always examine the car, from top to bottom, and inside and out. You want to look for signs of damage and that the overall condition of the vehicle is aligned with what you expect. This includes:

- **Bodywork** - look for large panel gaps, scratches, dents, damage and window chips/cracks.
- **Interior** - look for damage to the upholstery and check that all electrics, seatbelts and technology work as expected.
- **Engine** - look for oil and coolant leaks and inspect components such as the radiator, timing belt and battery.
- **Exhaust** - perform a cold start and look out for thick white, grey or blue smoke.
- **Wheels and tyres** - check the tyre tread and listen to creaking from the suspension.
- **Gearbox and clutch** - ensure the transmission is smooth and test the clutch's biting point.

Ask questions

Ask questions about the car's service history, previous owners, modifications and accident history. If there are any discrepancies, be sure to ask about them now as unclear answers or behaviour can **help you detect scams and fraud**. Fraudsters will typically insist on communicating via email or online chat, so it's worth arranging a phone call to discuss the details instead.

Double-check the documents

You should've already asked the seller about the car's documentation, but it's always worthwhile **double-checking** the details to ensure they align with what was discussed previously. This includes reviewing the car's mileage, V5C, VIN number and service history to make sure they all align.

Test drive the vehicle

Be sure to take the vehicle for a **thorough** test drive, testing the car's components and listening out for any unexpected noises. After the test drive has finished, re-inspect the vehicle for any leaks or issues once it's rested for a few minutes.

Agree to the sale

If you're happy with the vehicle and would like to purchase it then go ahead and negotiate a deal. Ensure (in writing) that any deposit you pay will be returned if you do not purchase the vehicle and never pay for a vehicle that you haven't seen (unless buying from a highly reputable dealer online). You should also avoid carrying large amounts of cash to reduce the risk of theft.



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Remember that if at any point something doesn't feel right, you're free to walk away from a deal as there's no obligation to purchase a vehicle until the deal has been agreed.