

BUYING  
**A USED CAR**  
CHECKLIST

Looking to buy a used car?

Follow our checklist to avoid buying a lemon.  
Record what you find to decide whether to purchase  
the car, or help you negotiate the best price.

CREATED BY



# 1

# BEFORE THE INSPECTION

Do your homework! Being prepared will put you in the best position to know what you're buying, and the best position to negotiate a sale price.

## Ask the seller

Why are you selling the car? .....

How long have you owned the vehicle? ..... years

Has the car been in an accident? YES  NO

If yes, what has been repaired? .....

How many kilometers are on the car? .....

What is the vehicle registration and CTP expiry date?

Rego expiry //

CTP expiry //

What is the car's VIN?

Does your insurance cover me to drive the car? YES  NO

## Book at the right time

Always try and inspect in bright daylight and during dry conditions to see the car in its true light.

## Have finance and a deposit ready

When you find the right car you'll want to know that you have finance ready to go, plus a holding deposit to secure the car.

## Get a background check: [revs.com.au](https://www.revs.com.au) \$37

Knowing the cars history will help you negotiate a sale price, and ultimately help you decide whether you should buy the car.

## Take someone with you

Four eyes are better than two, plus there's safety and negotiating power in numbers.

# 2

# AT THE INSPECTION

Spending the time to do a thorough inspection could mean the difference between buying a lemon, or years of trouble free driving.

Follow the checklist below when you inspect the vehicle to make sure you cover all bases.

### HOT TIP!

If you're not confident running through the inspection checklist, take someone with you who is.

## 1. DOCUMENTS

### Inspect the log book

Has it been kept up to date? Look for a repairers stamp and date alongside each service interval.

Do the dates match the age/km's of the car?

### Check with the seller

Does the sellers drivers licence match the name on the registration papers? YES  NO

If not, what is the full name of the owner? .....

Do they have any invoices for work carried out?

YES  NO



## 2. BODY DAMAGE

### Accidents and rust

Check inside the boot, the floors and doors for dark stains, or dimpled/bubbled paint.

#### **HOT TIP!**

Run a fridge magnet across the car. If there are any sections where it doesn't stick it may indicate plastic body filler post an accident.

### Doors and boot/ tailgate

Catches should close firmly.  
Check rubber seals for wear and tear.

### Hail

Check the bonnet, roof and boot for small dents.

### Paint

Look for variation in the colour, overspraying, ripples or drip marks.

## 3. EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR

### Accessories

Check the following are working if applicable: air conditioning, electric windows/mirrors/seats, sound system, GPS.

### Jack and tool-kit

Ensure they're in the boot; all parts are in place and are in a good condition.

### Lights

Turn the ignition to reds (i.e. when you turn the key and the lights come on, prior to starting the car). Make sure the dashboard lights up like a Christmas tree displaying all the warning lights. The primary ones to check are the ABS and or SRS air bag (if applicable).



### Seat belts

Check that all seat belts are working correctly, including the buckles, adjusters and retraction. Check for any thread damage on the belt itself.

### Upholstery, carpets and trim

Check for general wear and tear.

## 4. UNDER THE BONNET

### Battery

Check the battery terminals and leads. Make sure they're free from corrosion and damage.

### Engine oil

Check the oil level and condition. Level should be within normal range. If the oil has a milky appearance (rather than clear), this could indicate water contamination, which indicates a blown head gasket or cylinder head problem.

### Engine sound

Listen for an irregular rhythm when idling, or any knocking/rattling noises when accelerating.

### Radiator coolant

Check to ensure it is clear and brightly coloured. Dark discolouration could indicate a cracked cylinder head or a leaking gasket.

### Radiator fan

Check the fan blades and tubes are free from corrosion and damage.

### VIN (vehicle identification number)

The VIN is found on a metal plate in the engine bay. Make sure it matches the VIN on the cars registration papers. Also look for signs of interference - scratches, holes or other unusual markings.

### Year and month of manufacture

Check they're as advertised. This is usually found on the built date plate alongside the VIN.

## 5. UNDER THE CAR

### Oil leaks

Look for the appearance of oil in all of the following: engine bay, transmission, axles, brakes, power steering and shocks.

### Tyres (+ the spare)

Check for uneven wear, damage and tread. Use the matchstick test to test the tread by placing a matchstick, red head down into the tread of the tyre. If any of the red head is showing above the tread, it's time for new tyres.

## 6. TEST DRIVE

### Brakes

Make sure the brake pedal does not sink to the floor or feel spongy. And make sure the steering wheel does not vibrate when the brakes are applied at speed. The car should stop in a straight line and smoothly when the brakes are applied.

### Engine

When driving make sure the car runs smoothly (accelerating, decelerating and cruising). Listen for any knocking or rattling sounds.

### Exhaust

Leave the car running and check the rear for any blue/black smoke coming from the exhaust pipe. Coloured smoke could indicate a blown head gasket.

### Radiator coolant

Check to ensure it is clear and brightly coloured. Dark discolouration could indicate a cracked cylinder head or a leaking gasket.

### Steering

Does the steering wheel have a lot of free movement, or pull to one side, when driving on a straight road? This could indicate a suspension or wheel alignment problem.

### Suspension

Listen for any rattles as you go over bumps.

### Transmission

For both manual and automatic, ensure all gear changes operate smoothly.





# 4

# SEALING THE DEAL

Before you hand over your cash and drive away make sure you have the paperwork sorted.

## Making your offer

Based on the information you've gathered to date, what's the maximum you're willing to pay for the car? .....

## Dealing with outstanding debt

Did the REVS check reveal any outstanding debt?

YES  NO

If so follow these steps:

Ask the seller to obtain a payout figure in writing from the financier.

Make two separate payments. One to the financier for the payout figure. The other to the seller for the outstanding balance (if applicable).

Never pay the full amount to the seller.

Obtain a receipt from both in your name, plus a letter of discharge from the financier in your name. Keep this letter and the receipts with your PPSR certificate (Personal Property Securities Register) that came with your REVS check. This will protect you from repossession due to financial interests not registered.

## Sorting the paperwork

Before you drive away, make sure the seller gives you:

The car's registration papers

All keys, including ignition, glove box, boot and alarm

The logbook and owner's manual

Instructions for working and deactivating any alarm

Location of the hidden ignition or kill switch, if applicable

Radio security number, if applicable

A receipt

## Transferring the car into your name

To be completed within 14-days at your local motor registry office.



**5**

# RECEIPT

Use this receipt to capture all the necessary information, making sure it's signed.

Date:   /   /

Vehicle make: \_\_\_\_\_

Vehicle model: \_\_\_\_\_

Engine size: \_\_\_\_\_

Transmission:  Automatic /  Manual

Month/year of manufacture:   /

VIN:

Registration number:

Registration expiry date:   /   /

Agreed price: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amount paid to financier: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Balance remaining to financier: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amount paid to seller: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Balance remaining to seller: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Buyers name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sellers name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sellers address: \_\_\_\_\_

Sellers signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# FOUND YOUR DREAM CAR?

Doing the research, thoroughly inspecting the vehicle and ensuring all the paperwork is in order could save you thousands and loads of grief.

It's the difference between years of trouble free driving, or buying a lemon.

## Buying a used car?

Book a Blue Toro Mobile Mechanics Vehicle Inspection before you buy.

