The Ultimate Buying Used Cars Checklist

Hawthorne AUTO SQUARE

The Cars Basics

Year	
Make	
Model	
Asking Price/Phone#	
Trade in Value	

The Body

Scratches	
Dents	
Windshield	
Headlights	
Inspection Stricker Current?	

Rustry Brake Rotors

The Interior

Rip on seats	
Car Options	
Headliner	
Automatic/Manual	
Steering Wheel	

Under The Car

Leaks	
Rust	
Suspension	
Frame Damage	

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Questions to ask the owner (make sure story is realistic and answers questions consistently)

- **1.)** How long have you owned the car?
- **2.)** Why are you selling it?
- **3.)** Does everything work/any problems?
- **4.)** Any service records, what have you done since owning the car?
- **5.)** What did you use the car for?
- **6.)** How many miles did you put on it when you owned it?
- **7.)** What car are you looking to get now? Why?

Things to bring:
- OBDII Scanner
- Magnet
- Flashlight
- Paper towel
- Pen

From Your Research

Value of the Car (Trade in value)	

Vin Check (https://vinrcl.safercar.gov/vin/) & (https://www.nicb.org/theft_and_fraud_awareness/vincheck)

Engine (Start, cold, let warm up, go for ride)

Scan Engine with OBDII Scanner (P1000= codes cleared recently)

Before Startup

Hood pops open easily?		Hood support/struts work?	
Frame		Clean VS Dirty (was the engine detailed)	
Inspect for leaks (oil, coolant, tranny)		Any damage/new parts	
Oil level and oil (No metal, not frothy)		Oil Cap (no froth under cap)	
Check Coolant		Hoses, velts, battery post, wires, etc.	

Cold Startup

Any strange noises/smoke?		Does it take too long to start?	
Does the motor move a lot?		Check under oil cap (strong pulses/smoke)	
Idle		Check exhaust for smoke upon startup	

Warm Startup

Any strange noises/smoke?		Does it take too long to start?	
Check under oil cap		Idle (Does the idle drop and smooth out)	
Bubbling in radiator reservoir		Check exhaust for smoke upon startup	

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Interior

Seats: Front & Rear

Damage, rips, tares, stains, smell		Solid/No movement	
Adjust properly (Forward, back, tilt)			

Carpet: Front, rear and trunk

Check under carpets (rust, water)		Floor mats?	
Stains, holes, cuts, smell, dampness			

Trunk

Spare (holds air, not rusty)		Jack with lug wrench	
Spare tire carrier round (no indents)		Lug nut key (Locking lug-nuts)	
Water marks, damp carpet?			

Vehicle Options

Power Windows (roll up/down, scratches)		Window tint (bubbles, legal)	
Power Mirrors (heat & movement)		Power Locks (all doors lock/unlock)	
Radio (am/fm/clock set right, speakers work)		AC/Heat (all settings, all vents)	
Navigation (make sure it locates)		Sunroof (opens/closes, no leaks)	
Rear view mirror (auto-dim)		Parking Sensors (beep in reverse)	
Lights (glove box, map, dashboard, etc)		Emergency brake holds car in neutral	
Heated Seats		Wipers and washer fluid work	
Check for owner's manual		All gauges work	

Headliner

Sagging?		Water damage, burns, damage	

Wear and Tear

Gas/Brake pedal		Steering Wheel	
Shift Knob		Seats/Carpet	

Exterior

Lights

High/Low beams		Front running lights	
Front fog lights		Front turn signals	
Brake running lights		Pressed brake lights (3rd brake light)	
Rear turn signals		Rear fog lights	

Bodywork

Panel Gaps		Paint Seams on edge of panels	
Bondo (magnet and tapping methods)			

Text Drive (go for a regular drive city and highway)

Acceleration Test: Smooth, no knocks or hesitation

Regular Acceleration		Hard Acceleration	

Turning Test

Stationary- turn lock to lock (noise/feel)		Moving- turn 360 (noise/feel both ways)	
Turn back and forth in motion to sway car		Hard turn while moving	

Brake Test: Smooth. no pulls, no noises, no vibrations

Regular Braking		Hard Braking (try to activate abs)	
ABS Light on dash?		Noise/pulling?	

Highway: stop and go, bumps, turns, slower

RPM (top gear/overdrive)		Smooth/controlled/comfortable/solid	
Noises (thuds, squeaks, whines)		Downshift at cruising speed	
Cruise Control			

City: stop and go, bumps, turns, slower

Noises (thuds, squeaks, whines)		Vibrations	
Does the car feel good to drive?		Shifting (smooth, crisp, no slipping)	

Scan Engine after Test Drive