

EXIT

Used Car Inspection Checklist

Walkaround, test drive, paperwork

General information, not a substitute for an inspection by an independent mechanic.

Not financial, legal or mechanical advice. Laws vary by state.

© 2026 Rip & Ride LLC. Free to print and share with your household. Please do not resell.

How to use this checklist

Print one copy per car. Do the phone and online checks first, then the walkaround and test drive. If a car passes, pay an independent mechanic to inspect it before you buy. If the seller won't allow that, walk away.

Car

Year, make, model

VIN

Mileage

Asking price

Seller and phone

Date seen

Before you go	Done
☐ Open recalls checked by VIN (nhtsa.gov/recalls)	
☐ Vehicle history report and title brands checked (vehiclehistory.gov lists approved providers)	
☐ Asked: accidents, major repairs, number of owners	
☐ Asked: service records available?	
☐ Asked: can I take it to my own mechanic?	

Walkaround

Body and glass	OK?
☐ Panel gaps even all around	
☐ Paint color and texture match on every panel	
☐ No rust on wheel arches, rocker panels or under doors	
☐ Windshield free of cracks	
☐ All lights work: head, tail, brake, turn, reverse	

Tires and underneath	OK?
☐ Tread even across each tire (uneven wear can mean alignment issues)	
☐ All four tires the same brand and size	
☐ No fluid drips under the car	
☐ Exhaust not hanging or heavily rusted	

Under the hood (engine cold)	OK?
☐ Oil level and color look normal on the dipstick	
☐ Coolant at the correct level	
☐ No cracked or frayed belts and hoses	
☐ Battery terminals free of heavy corrosion	
☐ No signs of fresh leaks or oil sprayed around	

Inside and on the road

Inside	OK?
☐ Warning lights come on at start-up, then go out	
☐ A/C blows cold and heat blows hot	
☐ All windows, locks, mirrors and seats work	
☐ No damp carpet or musty smell (possible leak or flood)	
☐ Odometer reading matches the history report	

Test drive	OK?
☐ Starts easily from cold	
☐ No knocking, ticking or grinding noises	
☐ Shifts smoothly, no slipping or harsh jerks	
☐ Brakes firmly and straight, no grinding or pulsing	
☐ Steering straight, no pull or vibration at highway speed	
☐ No clunks over bumps	

Paperwork	OK?
☐ Title in the seller's name, no salvage or flood brand	
☐ Dealer Buyers Guide read: "as is" or warranty	
☐ Service records reviewed	
☐ Both keys present	
☐ Out-the-door price in writing	

Compare the cars you've seen

	Car 1	Car 2	Car 3
Year / make / model			
Mileage			
Asking price			
Out-the-door price			
History report OK?			
Walkaround issues			
Test drive issues			
Mechanic's verdict			
Insurance quote			
Notes			

Reasons to walk away

- ☐ The seller won't allow an independent inspection
- ☐ The title isn't in the seller's name, or is "lost"
- ☐ A salvage, flood or rebuilt title you weren't told about
- ☐ Mileage that doesn't match the records
- ☐ Pressure to pay a deposit or decide today
- ☐ Payment requested by wire, gift card or crypto

Published by Rip & Ride LLC, 30 N Gould St Ste R, Sheridan, WY 82801. Guides and the true cost calculator at thenickelstretcher.com.