

■ Pre-owned car buying check list

Have you found a previously owned car that you like? Remember, in the world of pre-owned vehicles, nothing is perfect and nothing is brand new! Follow the directions ahead to provide peace of mind that 'it is as good as it looks.'

INSPECT THE CAR

Tires - look at the tread depth and look for even wear across the tire

Rims - watch for bent or damaged rims (curb rash and pothole dents)

Rust - look under car and along the bottom of body panels

Doors and fenders - look down the side of the car from a sharp angle. If the car is dry, you should see a near perfect reflection of the area. Any distortion indicates either dents and/or poorly done bodywork. Check the areas on the car where body parts meet. The seams should be even and flush. If the gap from the top of the door to the bottom is different, there is a good chance the car has been in an accident.

Carfax - if the report shows an accident, try to find the affected areas. Hopefully, you can't find it. Under the hood - do not be fooled by shine on motor parts. Look for oil and anti-freeze leaks. Everything should be tightly mounted or attached. Beware of one newer looking part. This might indicate a previous problem. Avoid cars that have custom or high performance parts, as these cars are often driven hard.

Keep in mind that certain things can't or won't be fixed, such as:

Interior wear	Smell (smoke)	Bad body work	Rust
Water leaks	Knocking motors	Slipping transmission	

START THE CAR

Keep the door open! You want to hear the motor start and see the exhaust when it first starts. If you hear a knocking sound or see black or blue smoke that would indicate the motor is having major issues.

Does the car run smoothly?

Did an engine light come on?

Put the car in gear and listen. There should NOT be any sudden jerks or louder thumps.

Put the car in reverse and listen again. Repeat this a couple times to make sure it is consistent.

TRY EVERYTHING

Power windows – test each doors' window

Power locks – check the controls on the door and with the key fob

Remote start – give it a try, but remember most cars must be locked first, check distance

A/C – even if it is cold outside, check all of the vents

Heat – even if it is hot outside, check vents, floor and defrost

Radio – move the balance so you can hear each speaker one at a time

Navigation – put in your work address and verify the system is operational

Sunroof – open and close, look for water marks around headliner that indicate leakage

Power seats – move them forward, backward, up and down

Heated and A/C seats – turn them on

Spare tire and tools – make sure they are in the car



TEST DRIVE SUGGESTIONS- USE EXTREME CAUTION WHILE PERFORMING THESE

Remember – While the car is not brand new, it should still feel tight and steer true. The engine should perform smoothly with reasonable power depending on which car you are considering. The transmission should run through all of the gears and down shift without hard shifts or slipping and/or engine acceleration.

From a stop – turn the wheel all the way and move forward. The car should make little or no noise in the front end area. Stop and turn the wheel the other way to repeat the test.

While moving – gently loosen your grip of the steering wheel and see if the car pulls to the right or the left. Does the steering wheel have any vibration or shaking feeling to it?

While moving – check the brakes by stopping both hard and soft. In both cases, the car should stop firmly and straight. The wheel should not shake.

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