



Test driving a car - what to check

Tick these off as you go...



1. Does it start

If the car doesn't start, it may need a new battery or alternator.



2. Check the steering

Does it work flawlessly with no odd noises? Is the power steering working, or does the wheel feel heavy? If you take your hands off the wheel, does the vehicle pull aside?



3. Test the brakes

Go hard on the brakes and check if it stops cleanly and in a straight line without pulling to a side? Also test the handbrake on a hill.



4. Quick as you'd expect?

Accelerate through the gears and check whether it keeps up with traffic? If it's slow there may be issues.



5. How's the suspension?

Drive over bumpy roads and listen for clunks as some cars have firmer suspension than others, and feel for any unusual jolts.



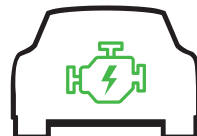
6. Assess the gears

Are the gears easily changing? Check for slow transitions or crunching noises, and make sure the gear stick centres out of gear it's self. If the car is an automatic, make sure the gear changes are smooth and in line with the road speed.



7. Check the clutch

Is the biting point easy to find? To check for slipping, try accelerating up a hill at low revs (in a high gear) . To check if the clutch is strong, try a quick getaway.



8. Listen to the engine

Listen to the engine. Is it running smoothly, or does it sound rough?



9. Gauging temperature

Check the engine turns over alright both from cold and warm. Has the seller heated up the vehicle in advance - why? If the gauge gets to midway quite fast and stays there, it may need a new thermostat.



10. Do you like it?

Are you happy with the car? Do you see it as a car you can use for your daily journeys?





What to check when viewing a used car

Tick these off as you go...



1. Upholstery

Check for tears or stains. Make sure the smell is good because bad smell such as cigarette smoke can be difficult to get rid of.



2. Dents and scratches

Always inspect the car in clear daylight as rain and darkness can hide any problems. Is there any sign of kerbing on the wheels? Can you see any dents or scratches on the bodywork?



3. Tyres

Check the tread on the tyres. Legally the minimum is 1.6mm and if they are below 3mm you'll have to think about the cost of changing them.



4. Panel gaps

Make sure there isn't any large gaps between the panels. If there are large gaps, it can indicate the car was in an accident and repaired poorly.



5. Under the oil cap

Check for signs of a white substance. It could show that the coolant has mixed with oil and this can be a sign of head gasket failure. Inspect the coolant expansion tank and make sure it looks clean.



6. Electrics

Check all the electrics. Air con, windows, the radio. Although these may be easy repairs, they could be a negotiating point.



7. Glass

Is there any chips or cracks in the windscreen? Inspect the lights for cracks, chips, internal moisture or fogging.



8. Wheel accessories

Does the car require a spare wheel? Is it there, and in good condition? Also make sure it has a lifting jack and adapter for locking wheel nuts.



9. Wear and tear

Is the condition of the car as it should be in regards to the mileage and age?



10. Fluid levels

Check the oil, brake and power steering fluid levels as low levels could indicate the car was poorly maintained. Check for oil leaks under the car.

