

Test drive checklist



This check list can help you on your test drive. But if you're serious about buying the car, you might want to arrange a professional inspection with [RedBook Inspect](#).

BEFORE YOU GO

- ☐ Bring your driver's licence and ask the seller if their insurance covers you to test drive the car
- ☐ Check the car history report. You can always buy one [here](#)
- ☐ Search online for common issues with the make, model and year so you know what to look for
- ☐ Take photos and notes during your inspection
- ☐ Bring a torch to check under the car and paper towels for testing oil.
- ☐ Wear comfortable shoes so you can properly feel the pedals during the test drive
- ☐ Inspect the car before you drive it for parts 1-4 below. It's easier to pick up on things when the engine is cold.

1. EXTERIOR

- ☐ Check for dents, scratches, rust, bubbling, mismatched paint or uneven panel gaps, these can indicate previous repairs
- ☐ Open and close every door, the bonnet and the boot to make sure they operate smoothly
- ☐ Check the windscreen and windows for chips or cracks, and that all lights work
- ☐ Check the tyres have no obvious damage or uneven wear
- ☐ Look underneath the car for fresh oil, coolant or other fluid leaks

2. UNDER THE BONNET

- ☐ Check the engine oil. The oil should be honey-brown on the dipstick, not black or sludgy.

- ☐ Ask about any aftermarket modifications
- ☐ Match the compliance plate, usually on the driver's door jamb or under the bonnet, with the registration paperwork
- ☐ Look for cracked belts, worn hoses, loose wiring, corrosion or signs of poor-quality repairs

3. INSIDE THE CAR

- ☐ Check the seats and seatbelts are in good condition
- ☐ Turn the ignition on, then check that the warning lights come on and switch off after you turn the engine off
- ☐ Test the air conditioning, heater and infotainment system, including Bluetooth, Apple CarPlay or Android Auto (if fitted)
- ☐ Check all windows, mirrors, door locks, reverse camera and parking sensors work (if fitted)
- ☐ Look for damp carpets, water damage, or bad smells.
- ☐ Check the boot for the spare wheel or repair kit, jack, tools and cargo blind or cover (if supplied)
- ☐ Check that all keys are included and that remote locking works

4. EV OR HYBRID CARS

- ☐ Inspect the charging port for damage
- ☐ Ask for a battery health report. These can be purchased through [RedBook Inspect](#)
- ☐ Check the tyres closely, EVs are heavier than petrol cars and wear tyres faster

A note on this checklist: The information here is general in nature and covers some of the things to consider when buying a car. It doesn't replace an independent mechanical inspection. carsales doesn't make any representations or warranties about the accuracy or completeness of this information and excludes all liability (other than liability that can't lawfully be excluded) for any loss or damage arising from its use.

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5. ON THE TEST DRIVE

- ☐ Check acceleration and gear changes are smooth, with no hesitation
- ☐ Make sure the steering tracks straight without pulling
- ☐ Test the brakes. They should feel firm with no vibration or pulling
- ☐ Check for dashboard warning lights during the drive
- ☐ Test cruise control and driver assistance features, and that heating and cooling continue to work while driving (if fitted)
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6. AFTER THE TEST DRIVE

- ☐ Check under the car again for fresh fluid leaks
- ☐ Look for steam, unusual smells or signs of overheating

- ☐ Take photos and write down any concerns before you forget them

7. PAPERWORK

- ☐ Confirm the seller's details match the registration papers.
- ☐ Ask to see the service history and receipts
- ☐ Check for outstanding manufacturer recalls, search the VIN at [recalls.gov.au](#) or on the manufacturer's website
- ☐ Confirm how many keys, manuals and accessories are included

8. BEFORE YOU BUY

- ☐ Compare the asking price with similar cars
- ☐ Consider an inspection through [RedBook Inspect](#) before committing to the purchase
- ☐ Download a record of sale from carsales. If you paid through carsales, it's available after the purchase is finalised. If you paid another way, enter the payment method and agreed amount then download.

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