Used Car Buyer's Inspection Check List

PART 1. MECHANICAL INSPECTION

(c) 1991 SOL (11/18/91)

FIRST PHONE CONTACT:

Name: ______________________________________
Address: ______________________________________
Phone: (h) ______________ (w) ______________
Date/Time: ______________________________________

1. Can you describe the car and its condition?

2. Does it run well?

3. How is the:
   • Body?
   • Any Rust?
   • Paint?
   • Interior?
   • Tires?
   • Engine?
   • Brakes?
   • Shocks?

4. Does it have Overdrive or Turbo? Do they work?

5. What special features or options does it have?

6. Why are you selling it?

7. How long have you owned it? ...had it for sale?

8. Is it currently registered and licensed?

9. Where is the car located?

10. How many miles does it have on it? [15K/yr?]

11. What problems have you had with the car?

12. Has it ever been hit or in an accident?

13. What work does it need done on it now?

14. How much are you asking for it? or What's the least you're willing to take for it?
QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

Why am I buying this car?
What do I intend to do with it?
Will it be my commute vehicle?
What service and support is locally available?
Will I be driving it year-round or summer only?
Do I want to work on the car more than driving it?
Am I willing to pay a premium because someone else has already done most of
the serious work on the car?
What is the most that I'm willing to pay for this car?
What is the least that I think that the car can be had for?

SUGGESTIONS:

1. Read some of the "How to buy Used Cars" books available at your library.
They provide useful strategies and cautions that go far beyond the scope of
this list. Also, review this list carefully before using it.

2. Always inspect/take delivery of the vehicle in the broad daylight, never
in the evening/night or in the rain.

3. A clean piece of cardboard placed under the engine/trans after the test-
drive will help show fluid leaks.

4. In some states, older non-titled vehicles may be titled with just a bill
of sale. Other states may require an additional security bond to be posted.
Use extreme caution in either of these cases!

5. Require seller have the vehicle pass all state inspections (safety,
emissions) at a mutually agreeable shop (NOT one of his choosing) before you
pay for it. Old (> 30 days) inspections are of absolutely no use to you.

6. A general guide to reading exhaust smoke:

Black smoke = unburned fuel. Valves bad or out of adjustment? Carb out of
adjustment?

Blue smoke = burning oil. Accelerating: Piston rings bad? Decelerating: Valve
seats/guides bad?

White smoke = burning coolant!
Bad head gasket? Warped or cracked Head or Block?
TOOLS TO BRING FOR INSPECTION:

Essentials: A cynical, mechanically-minded friend, Your standard tool Set, Voltmeter, Compression Gauge, Tire gauge, Flashlight, Magnet, the 2 different spark plug sockets, spray lube, clean rags Clipboard, pen and hi-liter to use with a photocopy of this list, some cash, drivers license and copy of your insurance showing you are covered driving the sellers car.

Optional: tow rope, starting fluid, jumper cables, timing light, ramps, jack (floor or scissors), mirror, coveralls, rags, gas can, oil, duct tape, wire, repair manuals, misc. fuses, calculator

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Original Owner? _______________________________________________
Names/nums of previous owners available? ____________________________
What regular maintenance was done? Records? _________________________
Who was your mechanic? name/address/phone? _______________________
What gas mileage have you been getting? _____________________________
Are there any repair or gas mileage records? _________________________
Oil change interval? _____________________________________________
Type of oil used: ________________________________________________
How old are the tires? ___________________________________________
Battery? _______________________________________________________
Has it passed emissions recently? _________________________________
Where? _______________________________________________________
Has any bodywork ever been done? ________________________________
Why? _________________________________________________________
Receipts? _____________________________________________________
Any mechanical work recently? _________________________________
Where? _______________________________________________________
Receipts? _____________________________________________________
What work remains to be done or corrected? _______________________
Are there any missing parts? _________________________________
Do you have any extra parts or wheels for it? _______________________
What new/aftermarket parts are in the car? _______________________
Receipts? _____________________________________________________
Was it ever used for towing? ____________________________________
Has it ever been crashed, burned, stolen, hit or rolled? _______________
How was the car generally driven? ________________________________
On highway or in town? _______________________________________
Are engine, transmission, steering, differential original? ______ (If not, why not? Origin and receipts?) _____________________________
Do you have any books about the car or the engine? _____________
(repair books, owners manuals, history or general interest, parts catalogs, club newsletters)
Any interesting history? _______________________________________
Has it ever been raced? _________________________________________
Are there any tools that come with the car? _______________________
Do you know of any parts cars or good parts sources? ______________
PART 2. EXT/INT INSPECTION.

(Don't start the engine yet)

OWNERSHIP VERIFICATION:
(Do all of the following agree and seem right?)

Name on title: 

Name on registration: 

Model/Year on title: 

VIN on title: __________________________

VIN on registration: 

VIN on dash: 

VIN on door: 

Mileage on title: 

Mileage on odometer: 

Price on title: 

Asking price: 

Blue Book price: 

IS THE CAR READY TO SELL:

OK Not-OK
___ _____ Title ready for transfer? Any liens?
___ _____ Do body numbers match those on title?
___ _____ Title in sellers name?
___ _____ Do body numbers match registration?
___ _____ Current Emissions certificate, < 30 days old?
___ _____ Current registration? Current Plates?
___ _____ Current Safety certificate if req'd, < 30 days?

EXTERIOR WALK-AROUND:

OK Not-OK
___ _____ Check door edges and underside for rust/tears
___ _____ Check doors/hinges for stress/tears
___ _____ Doors/hoods open/close freely? Rubs?
___ _____ Is anything obviously broken?
___ _____ Are grill/lights cracked, dented or broken?
___ _____ Car sits level? (view from all sides)
___ _____ Are bumpers dinged? Rusty? Loose? Level?
___ _____ Paint OK? Panels same shade? Cracks?
___ _____ Any of the trim or hubcaps rusty or missing?
___ _____ New paint? Why? Any body ripples?
___ _____ Find bottom of trunk/side wells. Rust? Holes?
___ _____ Rust/repair on body? Fenders? Sills?
___ _____ Raise/lower the top. Condition? Does it leak?
___ _____ Any Bondo? Fiberglas? (magnet) Why?
___ _____ Rubber parts and seals condition? Cracked?
___ _____ Any fender dings or misalignment? Why?
___ _____ Gas tank & fill hose OK? Rusty? Patched?
___ _____ Door/hood dings? Misalignment? Why?
___ _____ Jack OK? Spare tire good? Jack points good?
___ _____ Tires: Tread? Bulges? Cracks?
___ _____ All the same model/brand?
___ _____ Rims: Bent? Rusted? Cracks? All the same?

UNDERSIDE:

OK Not-OK
___ _____ Anything dented? Bent? Welded? Why?
___ _____ Any underbody/floor pan/trunk rust?
___ _____ Any rocker panel or wheel well rust?
___ _____ Are main frame members rusted? Dogs?
___ _____ Disks grooved? Brake pads? Any leaks?
___ _____ Turn, push/pull driveshaft by hand
___ _____ Any movement or slop? U-joints OK?
___ _____ Constant velocity joints and boots OK?
___ _____ Camber? Caster? Tire wear even?
___ _____ Suspension loose? Pull on side/top of wheels
___ _____ All shocks & struts damp OK? Any leaks?
___ _____ Exhaust pipe/cats/muffler solid & original?
___ _____ Tail pipe: Grey=OK, sooty/oily/greasy=Not-OK
___ _____ Anything hanging down, taped or wired up?
___ _____ Any non-stock suspension mods?
UNDER HOOD:

OK Not-OK
___ _____ Anything broken? Patched? Leaking?
___ _____ Is engine clean? Any rust? Stock?
___ _____ Has it overheated? Paint blistered?
___ _____ Check fluid levels. Look for leaks
___ _____ Check fluid condition with flashlight
___ _____ Any play in main crankshaft pulley?!$
___ _____ Any play in any of the other pulleys?
___ _____ V-Belts cracked? frayed? missing?
___ _____ Radiator corroded? Hoses cracked?
___ _____ Check coolant; run finger inside radiator neck to check for oil.
___ _____ Heater hoses stiff? Cracked? Patched?
___ _____ Is emissions equip original & working?!$
___ _____ Are catalytic converters original & working?$
___ _____ Distributor, cap, rotor, and points OK?
___ _____ Wiring harness appearance? Any new electrical tape?
___ _____ Open fuse box. Any missing? Any wiring hacks?
___ _____ Any non-stock engine modifications?
___ _____ Remove grounding cable, check for shorts
___ _____ System polarity: + or - ground?
___ _____ System voltage: ___________ volts
___ _____ Battery age/voltage ______/______ volts

INTERIOR/ELECTRICAL:

OK Not-OK
___ _____ Is anything broken? Torn? Patched?
___ _____ Carpets OK? Underlayment condition?
___ _____ Rust, rot or water under the carpets?
___ _____ Any wiring hacks under the dash?
___ _____ Seats dirty or torn? Look under cover
___ _____ Do both seats adjust? Seat heaters?
___ _____ Dash cracked? Headliner torn/dirty?
___ _____ Windshield cracked? Chips? Scratched?
___ _____ Windows all open & close? Any cracks?
___ _____ Mirrors all present and adjustable?
___ _____ Steering play? Does shaft move at all? Why?
___ _____ Brake pedal feels right? Smooth? Firm?
___ _____ Clutch pedal feels right? Smooth?
___ _____ All gauges/controls work? Stereo? Tape?
___ _____ Headlights high/low work? Lenses OK?
___ _____ Tail and side lights all work? Lenses OK?
___ _____ Brake lights all work? Any broken lenses?
___ _____ Turn signals all work? Any broken lenses?
___ _____ Windshield wipers & washer work?
___ _____ Heater, defroster, AC, and fans work?
___ _____ Safety equipment (seat belts, horn work?)
PART 3: TEST DRIVE.

IGNITION ON, BUT DON'T START ENGINE:

OK Not-OK
___ _____ Temp light should come on! Connected?
___ _____ Oil warning light should come on! Connected?
___ _____ Charge warning light should come on!

START THE ENGINE YOURSELF:

OK Not-OK
___ _____ Temp warning light goes out?
___ _____ Oil warning light goes out?
___ _____ Charge warning light goes out?
___ _____ Do all idiot lights go on/out right?
___ _____ Are all the instruments working?
___ _____ Does it start easily when cold?
___ _____ Does it run smoothly when cold?
___ _____ Depress clutch several times. Noises?
___ _____ Oil Pressure: idle_______ 4000 RPM_______
___ _____ Volts/Amps: idle_______ 4000 RPM_______
___ _____ Any odd engine noises when cold?
___ _____ Exhaust condition/noises? Pressure even?
___ _____ Cap pipe with clipboard. Any exhaust leaks?
___ _____ Any deposits on clipboard? Does it smoke?
___ _____ Turn car off. Does it restart? Restart again.
___ _____ Now pull forward. Check for leaks on ground.
___ _____ Do you have any gas? Does gauge really work?

TEST DRIVE (Allow 30-40 minutes)

OK Not-OK
___ _____ Test the foot and hand brakes first!
___ _____ Relax, drive a bit to get used to it.
___ _____ How does car ride? Soft or hard?
___ _____ Revs smoothly to red line? flat spots?
___ _____ Any unusual engine noises/vibrations?
___ _____ Any drive train noises or vibrations?
___ _____ Any noticeable slop in drive train?
___ _____ Reverse works? Rev. lights go on/off?
___ _____ Trans shifts smoothly to all gears?
___ _____ Overdrive engages/disengages properly
___ _____ Turbo engages/disengages properly?
___ _____ Any clunks, whines, rumbles, rattles?
___ _____ Clutch smooth? Slippage on hill test?
___ _____ Hand brake works? Test against engine
___ _____ Is the low engine speed operation OK?
___ _____ Brakes strongly to stop from 50mph?
___ _____ Do brakes still work? Stops straight?
___ _____ Make 2 tight 360' turns each way. Any noises?
___ _____ Accelerates smoothly from dead stop?
___ _____ Are there any hesitations/flat spots?
___ _____ Does the power seem right? Hill test.
Is it running too hot or cold? Why?
Drive beside a long wall. Any unusual sounds?
Is it too noisy in general at highway speeds?
Any noises or vibrations when accelerating?
Any noises or vibrations when coasting?
Any noises or vibrations when decelerating?
Any noises or vibrations when braking?
Steering action loose or tight? Parallel park.
Handles OK on bumps, curves and sharp corners?
Slams OK? Bad understeer, oversteer, lean?
Tracks straight with hands off steering wheel?
Brakes straight with hands off steering wheel?
Having fun yet? Comfortable? Does it fit?
Do the heater, defroster and AC work right?
Are all the instruments & lights still working?
Now let it idle a while. Is temp stable/OK?
Any exhaust, gas or coolant odors? Pull forward.
Turn it off. Go back to check ground for leaks.

Have friend get out and watch the car driving:

OK Not-OK
Tracks straight? (Frame bent?)
Smokes?
Wheels wobble? Any noises?
Leans? General impression?

POST DRIVE:

OK Not-OK
Open hood. See or hear anything unusual?
Does engine seem too hot?
Check for fluid leaks after shutdown.
(Oil, Coolant, Hydraulics, Trans, Fuel, Differential)
Check oil cap and dipstick for signs of water.
(Oil off-color, brown/grey/white or bubbly)
Compression test: (disconnect coil, remove ALL plugs)

1. Dry: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
2. Oiled: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8


Does it restart when warm? Why not?
PART 4. BILL OF SALE

Year, make, and model: _______________________________________
VIN: _________________________________________________________
Odometer reading: _____________________________________________
Date and time of sale: _________________________________________

Seller hereby acknowledges receipt of $____________ in the form of
________________ for full and final payment for the above vehicle, which is
sold "AS IS."

I, the seller, certify that I or we are the current owner of this
vehicle, and have the authority to sell it. I hereby transfer full ownership
of this vehicle described on this receipt to the buyer(s). I certify that the
Title or ownership of this vehicle at the time of sale is subject to no
outstanding taxes, fees, liens or encumbrances, other than those specified on
the Title or listed below, if any, and none other, and that if there are, the
seller will be held fully responsible for their payment.

Buyer(s) hereby acknowledges receipt of the following: the signed
certificate of ownership transferring seller's full ownership of the vehicle
and all of it's contents to the buyer; various maintenance records; this
signed bill of sale and the mileage disclosure statement; and all keys to the
vehicle as well as delivery of the vehicle.

(seller’s signature) (date) (buyer’s signature) (date)

(seller - print name) (buyer - print name)

(seller’s signature) (date) (buyers'signature) (date)

(seller - print name) (buyer - print name)

Address Address

City, State, Zip City, State, Zip

Phone Phone
PART 5. ODOMETER (MILEAGE) STATEMENT

(Two Pages)

(Federal regulations require you to state the odometer mileage upon transfer of ownership. An inaccurate or untruthful statement may make you liable for damages to your transferee, for attorney fees, and for civil or criminal penalties, pursuant to Sections 409, 412, and 413 of the Motor Vehicle Information and Cost Savings Act of 1972 (Pub. L. 92-513, as amended by Pub. L. 94-364) and applicable state laws.)

I, the seller __________________________, state that the odometer mileage on the vehicle described below now reads _______________ miles/kilometers.

Circle ONE only:

(1) I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the odometer reading as stated above reflects the actual mileage of the vehicle described below.

(2) I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the odometer reading as stated above reflects the amount of mileage in excess of designed mechanical odometer limit of 99,999 miles/kilometers of the vehicle described below.

(3) I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the odometer reading as stated above is NOT the actual mileage of vehicle described below and should not be relied upon.

__________________________________________________________________________
Make                 Model              Body Type
__________________________________________________________________________
Vehicle Identification No         Year         Color

Circle ONE only:

(1) I hereby certify that the odometer of said vehicle was not altered, set back, or disconnected while in my possession, and I have no knowledge of anyone doing so.

(2) I hereby certify that the odometer was altered for repair or replacement purposes while in my possession, and that the mileage registered on the repaired or replacement odometer was identical to that before such service.

(3) I hereby certify that the repaired or replacement odometer was incapable of registering the same mileage, that it was reset to zero, and that the mileage on the original odometer or the odometer before repair was _______________ miles/kilometers.
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