

USED-CAR PRE-PURCHASE CHECKLIST

1. Record what you know before committing

Buyer worksheet, not a certification or guarantee. Updated October 2, 2026.

Vehicle / year / mileage:

VIN / seller / date:

Write O = observed, Q = question/concern, N = not checked beside each item.

O is not a professional pass. Explain each concern on the line below it.

Only observe safely. No crawling under a vehicle, lifting it or opening hot coolant.

Road-test only with permission, legal/insurance arrangements and safe conditions.

RECORDS AND PERMISSION

[] VIN agrees across vehicle, listing and available paperwork?

[] Ownership/title questions and history-report discrepancies recorded?

[] Recall lookup saved with date; manufacturer instructions reviewed?

[] Dealer Buyers Guide / written promises / service records collected?

[] Independent inspection permission and appointment agreed?

SAFE OBSERVATIONS TO HAND TO THE INSPECTOR

[] Visible body, glass, tire or cabin damage; odors or dampness?

[] Warning messages, starting behavior and control operation recorded?

[] If safely driven: noises, shifting, steering or braking concerns?

Pause for unresolved identity/title issues or inspection refusal.

Do not test-drive a vehicle that appears unsafe. Seek qualified assistance.

This sheet does not establish roadworthiness or rule out hidden damage.

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2. Agree on inspection scope, then resolve the findings

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Inspector / appointment / quoted fee / written report reference:

Ask what is included and excluded for this vehicle. Mark N for unperformed work.
A history report, safety check and mechanical inspection answer different questions.

PROFESSIONAL SCOPE TO REQUEST

[] Mechanical, brakes, steering, suspension, tires and underbody scope?

[] Scan/data review, warning concerns and permitted road-test scope?

[] Prior repairs/body concerns; specialist referral if inspection is limited?

[] Vehicle-specific maintenance and hybrid/EV assessment where applicable?

[] Written findings, repair estimates and unresolved limitations supplied?

FINDING AND FOLLOW-UP LEDGER

1. Finding / evidence / urgency stated by inspector:

Repair estimate / unresolved test / responsible person / follow-up date:

2. Finding / evidence / urgency stated by inspector:

Repair estimate / unresolved test / responsible person / follow-up date:

3. Finding / evidence / urgency stated by inspector:

Repair estimate / unresolved test / responsible person / follow-up date:

Decision still pending / conditions to resolve before purchase:

Primary references checked October 2, 2026:
FTC: consumer.ftc.gov/articles/buying-used-car-dealer
NHTSA: nhtsa.gov/recalls
DOJ: vehiclehistory.bja.ojp.gov/nmvtis_understandingvhr
NICB: nicb.org/vincheck
Original request/record worksheet. It does not certify the car or predict future failures.