



What to check when viewing a used car

Tick these off as you go...



1. Tyres

How much tread have they got? The legal minimum is 1.6mm, so if they're below 3mm – factor in the cost of changing them soon.



2. Electrics

Try everything. Wind the windows up and down, turn on the radio, test the air con. Even easily-repaired problems are a negotiating point.



3. Dents and scratches

How's the bodywork? Any signs of kerbing on the wheels? Inspect in clear daylight, as rain or darkness will hide a lot.



4. Glass

Are there chips in the windscreen? If they turn into cracks, it'll need replacing. If they're in the driver's eyeline, it's an MOT failure too. Check all lights too for chips, cracks, fogging or internal moisture.



5. Panel gaps

Check the gaps between panels – large gaps could mean poor repair work after a crash. Make sure all panels match in colour.



6. Upholstery

Are there any stains or tears in the seats? Does it smell OK? Bad smells – particularly cigarette smoke – are hard to get rid of.



7. Fluid levels

Check all levels under the bonnet – oil, brake and power steering fluid. Low levels could indicate poor maintenance. Look for signs of oil leaks under the bonnet and car itself.



8. Wheel accessories

Should the car come with a spare wheel? Is it there, and in good condition? Also check for a lifting jack and adapter for locking wheel nuts.



9. Under the oil cap

Check for signs of a white, mayonnaise-like substance. It's usually caused by coolant mixing with oil – a sign of head gasket failure. Also check the coolant expansion tank looks clean.



10. Wear and tear

Is the condition about right for the age and mileage? Low miles but heavy wear on the driver's seat, steering wheel and pedals should raise alarm bells.