

Car Inspection Checklist

A checklist for inspecting your own car's condition and safety.

Exterior and body

- ☐ Walk around the car checking for dents, rust, cracks or fresh damage.
- ☐ Confirm the license plates are present, secure and readable.
- ☐ Check that doors, hood and trunk open, close and latch securely.
- ☐ Inspect the windshield and windows for chips or cracks in the line of sight.
- ☐ Check that mirrors are intact, secure and adjust properly.
- ☐ Look under the car for fresh fluid leaks or hanging components.

Lights and signals

- ☐ Test both low and high beam headlights for output and aim.
- ☐ Check brake lights and the center high-mount stop lamp.
Use a wall reflection or a helper to confirm brake lights at the rear.
- ☐ Verify front and rear turn signals and hazard lights flash correctly.
- ☐ Test reverse lights and the rear license plate light.
- ☐ Check parking, fog and daytime running lights where fitted.
- ☐ Confirm no warning lights stay lit on the dashboard after start-up.

Tires and wheels

- ☐ Check tire pressure on all tires against the door-jamb sticker.
- ☐ Measure tread depth and confirm it is above the legal minimum.
- ☐ Look for uneven wear, cuts, bulges or embedded objects.
- ☐ Confirm all lug nuts are present and wheel covers are secure.
- ☐ Inspect the spare tire's pressure and condition.
- ☐ Verify the TPMS light is off or address the warning.

Brakes and steering

- ☐ Test the brake pedal for firm, consistent feel without sinking.
- ☐ Listen for grinding or squealing when braking.
Grinding usually means worn pads; have the brakes inspected immediately.
- ☐ Confirm the parking brake holds the car on an incline.
- ☐ Check the steering for excessive play, pulling or vibration.
- ☐ Verify the ABS and brake warning lights are off.
- ☐ Listen for clunks over bumps that suggest worn suspension.

Fluids and under the hood

- ☐ Check engine oil level and condition on the dipstick.
- ☐ Verify coolant level in the reservoir when the engine is cold.
- ☐ Check brake fluid and power steering fluid levels.
- ☐ Top up windshield washer fluid.
- ☐ Inspect belts and hoses for cracks, fraying or leaks.
- ☐ Check the battery terminals are clean, tight and corrosion-free.

Interior and safety equipment

- ☐ Test the horn for a clear, loud sound.
- ☐ Check that wipers clear the glass and washers spray properly.
- ☐ Confirm all seatbelts latch, retract and are undamaged.
- ☐ Verify the defroster, heater and ventilation work.
- ☐ Check that warning, oil and fuel gauges read correctly.
- ☐ Confirm a warning triangle, first-aid kit and required items are aboard.