New Car Checklist

A checklist for what to do after buying a new car.

Paperwork and documents

- [ ] Collect the bill of sale, finance agreement and all signed contracts.
- [ ] Get the manufacturer's certificate of origin or title documents.
- [ ] Confirm the VIN matches every document and the car itself.
  Verify the VIN on paperwork matches the dash and door plates.
- [ ] Store the owner's manual, warranty booklet and service schedule.
- [ ] Keep all keys, fobs and the key code in a safe place.
- [ ] File copies of every document digitally as backup.

Insurance and registration

- [ ] Activate auto insurance before driving the car off the lot.
  Most lenders and laws require active coverage before you drive.
- [ ] Add the new VIN to your policy and confirm coverage levels.
- [ ] Register the vehicle and pay any taxes or fees by the deadline.
- [ ] Obtain license plates and the registration document.
- [ ] Display tags or stickers as your jurisdiction requires.
- [ ] Update your driver records or address if needed.

Warranty and protection

- [ ] Register the warranty with the manufacturer if required.
- [ ] Note warranty coverage, duration and what voids it.
- [ ] Review any extended warranty or service plan terms.
- [ ] Understand roadside assistance coverage and how to use it.
- [ ] Apply any paint, rust or interior protection if purchased.
- [ ] File warranty contacts and claim instructions for reference.

Learn the features

- [ ] Read the owner's manual sections on controls and warning lights.
- [ ] Set up driver profiles, mirrors, seats and steering position.
- [ ] Pair your phone and configure the infotainment system.
- [ ] Learn the driver-assistance and safety features and their limits.
- [ ] Locate the spare, jack, tools and tire repair kit.
- [ ] Find the fuel or charging door, hood release and tow points.

Break-in period

- [ ] Follow the manual's break-in mileage and speed guidance.
  Break-in guidelines vary by model; follow your owner's manual exactly.
- [ ] Vary engine speed and avoid sustained high revs early on.

- [ ] Avoid hard acceleration and heavy braking during break-in.
- [ ] Avoid towing or heavy loads until break-in is complete.
- [ ] Check fluid levels in the first weeks of ownership.
- [ ] Note the first service mileage or date and book it on schedule.

Setup and peace of mind

- [ ] Add a roadside assistance contact and emergency kit to the car.
- [ ] Save the dealer and service department contacts.
- [ ] Set a calendar reminder for the first scheduled service.
- [ ] Record the mileage and any included free services.
- [ ] Consider a dashcam, floor mats and other accessories.
- [ ] Keep a maintenance log to protect the warranty and resale value.