

Used Motor Vehicle Checklist

Handout 1

Check areas where common problems may occur in used vehicles.

Frame and Body

- Frame is free from cracks, corrective welds and not rusted through.
- No dog tracks (bent or twisted frame).

Engine

- No oil leakage (excluding normal seepage).
- Block or head is not cracked.
- Belts are all present and operable.
- No knocks or misses related to camshaft lifters and push rods.
- Normal exhaust discharge.

Transmission and Drive Shaft

- Proper fluid level with no leakage (excluding normal seepage).
- Case is not cracked or damaged.
- No abnormal noise or vibration caused by faulty transmission or drive shaft.
- Proper shifting and functioning in any gear.
- Manual clutch does not slip or chatter.

Differential

- Proper fluid level with no leakage (excluding normal seepage).
- Housing is not cracked or damaged.
- No abnormal noise or vibration caused by faulty differential.

Cooling System

- No leakage including radiator.
- Properly functioning water pump.

Electrical System

- No battery leakage.
- Properly functioning alternator, generator, battery and starter.

Fuel System

- No visible leakage

Accessories Operable

- Gauges or warning devices.
- Air conditioner.
- Heater and defroster.

Brake System

- Failure warning light works.
- Pedal firm under pressure.
- Enough pedal reserve.
- Stops vehicle in straight line.
- Hoses not damaged.
- Drum or rotor not too thin.
- Lining or pad thickness more than 1/32 inch.
- Power unit operating with no leaking.
- No damage to structural or mechanical parts.

Steering System

- Steering wheel does not have too much free play.
- Free play in linkage less than 1/4 inch.
- Steering gear does not bind or jam.
- Front wheels aligned properly.
- No cracks or slipping in power unit belts.
- Proper power unit fluid level.

Suspension System

- No damage in ball joint seals.
- Structural parts not bent or damaged.
- Stabilizer bar connected.
- Spring not broken.
- Shock absorber mounting not loose.
- No damaged or missing rubber bushings.
- Radius rod not damaged or missing.
- Shock absorber not leaking and functioning properly.

Tires

- Tread depth more than 2/32 inch.
- Sizes matched.
- No visible damage.

Wheels

- No visible cracks, damage or repairs.
- No loose or missing mounting bolts.

Exhaust System

- No leakage.

Prepared by Laura Connerly, Instructor - Family Resource Management, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, lconnerly@uaex.edu.

Source: Federal Trade Commission. *Buying a Used Car: A Consumer Guide from the Federal Trade Commission*. 2002.