



Before buying a car... The goal is to not buy a problem. If issues are found, use this to decide whether to walk away or negotiate the price down so you can correct the issues. (DON'T LET THE EXCITEMENT OF WANTING THE CAR GET IN THE WAY OF MAKING A WISE DECISION!)

Things you can check, take a flashlight (the flash light option on your phone will work). Also take a few sheets of paper towel and if you don't want to get your hands dirty a pair of thin gloves, latex type work great.



			FIRST Before even going to look at a car check NADA.COM and other local sales sources to see what other like vehicles are selling for. Is the asking price within range of these findings?
			Is the title clear (No major damage has occurred or been repaired) or a salvage/rebuilt/branded title (meaning major repairs were needed for accident, flood or other nature related damage) Note: It is illegal in most if not all states for a dealer to sell a salvage/rebuilt/branded title vehicle and not disclose the fact.
			NEXT WALK AROUND
			Headlight lenses faded?
			Look at the tires, is the rubber cracking? Check the tread all the way across, is there bald or low tread in any area? Are they wearing evenly or is there a rough pattern?
			Is there a spare tire and jack?
			NEXT UNDER THE HOOD (pop the hood)
			Remove the oil fill cap and shine the light inside (some cars have a splash shield that prevents this check from being accurate) is the metal clean and golden? Or Black and sludgy?
			Check the engine oil level, is it clean and full or low and dark?
			If there is a transmission dipstick (some are difficult to find, some cars need to be checked from under the car at a shop) pull it and see if it is bright red like cherry cough syrup? Or dark and burnt smelling? Or somewhere in the middle?
			NEXT LOOK UNDER THE CAR (Use paper towel to kneel on if you want to keep your knees clean) If it is dark out use your flashlight.
			From the front of the vehicle do you see any drips hanging down or wet spots from under the engine and transmission area? (Dealers do a good job at detailing the engine compartment from the top, so what may look really clean on top could still be an oily mess underneath)
			If it is an AWD or Four wheel drive vehicle look under the center and rear of the vehicle to see if there are any drips hanging.

			NEXT INSIDE THE CAR
			Use your flashlight and look under the driver's seat and under the dashboard for any rust or corrosion signs. Looking to see if this vehicle has been under water. If you notice water intrusion RUN AWAY! The lingering long term effects on a car's electrical system will turn into a nightmare for you and the shop.
			Start the engine and listen, Is there any rattling or clattering heard?
			First turn the radio on and see how cool it sounds, then turn it OFF and leave it OFF !!!
			Push all buttons, does everything work? If it has rear air conditioning/heater check those too! Roll all the windows completely down and up.
			Are there any warning lights on? Price range to correct problems that trigger a warning light could be \$30.00 to \$3,000.00 plus.
			Check all fan speeds for the heater and A/C system. Check all vent positions to make sure they are switching properly. NOTE: Buying in the winter, it will be difficult to know if the a/c is working properly. In the summer it will be difficult to know if the heater is working properly. These can be a very expensive systems to repair and a benefit of an inspection at a shop.
			LAST ROAD TEST THE VEHICLE (Around town and freeway driving)
			At a stop in gear do you notice any excessive vibration?
			Is there any hesitation when accelerating, is the transmission shifting smoothly?
			Is it smooth when braking or is it shuddering?
			Does the cruise control work?
			When driving at freeway and around town speeds do you hear any growling, clunking, or rattling noises while driving and turning?
			Tally up the check marks
			<p>If the car is lower in miles and following this guide you find all  then you are most likely a Green light to negotiate a deal!</p> <p>If you have a good share of checks in this column  (Yellow light) and especially this column  (Red light) then you can decide to go to the next step of having a third party shop (not the dealer's shop) look deeper and give pricing for potential issues. Or say no thanks and not give in to the pressure of sales personnel!!!</p>