

Car Inspection Checklist

By Richard Stern



History and paperwork

MoT certificate;

V5:

- Are the details correct? If not, walk away
- How many previous owners are there?
- Call the most recent one and ask them to verify the car's history
- Check the engine and chassis numbers match those on the car

Service history, Service book and Receipts

13

BMW Annual Check 17924 HEXAGON BMW AFTERSALES 1 BROWNS LANE REGG ROAD LONDON NW3 3EX Tel: 071-485 6011 23/9/91 [Signature]	BMW Inspection I km/miles Date/stamp/signature	BMW Inspection II BMW (GB) LIMITED Tel: 01344 425565 Dealer No. 00210 8/7/97 [Signature]	BMW Annual Check 1247 km/miles 22.5.92 CC-6 Date/stamp/signature
BMW Oil Service [Stamp]	BMW Oil Service [Stamp]	BMW Oil Service [Stamp]	BMW Oil Service [Stamp]
SPEEDOMETER CHANGED AND MILEAGE RESET TO ZERO ON 9/1/97 AT 40918 Kilometers DICK LOVETT (SPECIALIST CARS) LTD.			
BMW Oil Service 7677 km/miles DAVID GARDINER & CO BMW SPECIALIST UNIT 23 BRITTEN ROAD READING RG2 0AU Tel: 0118 991 74012-5-01	BMW Oil Service [Stamp]	BMW Oil Service [Stamp]	BMW Oil Service [Stamp]

Car from UK.com

Checking the car

Step 1

Look along the car's flanks for dings and dents, check the bumpers for scrapes, and scrutinise the wheels for kerb contact. Is the paint a consistent shade all over? Any of these can show a careless owner and offer a bargaining point to help lower the price.

Step 2

Does it look too shiny? What's the seller trying to hide. Honest grime is no bad thing, but look for excessive oil or fluid leaks – from the car, not the seller.

Step 3

Some rust will be obvious to spot, but feel under the wheel arches, doors and bumpers for rough edges – a ginger finger will give the game away. While you're crawling around, look at the tyres for excessive or uneven wear.

Step 4

Inside, does it reek of a chain smoker? Does the general wear and tear tally up with the car's mileage? Worn seats and shiny steering wheel and pedals on a low mileage car are giveaways.

Step 5

Make like a curious child and press every button to see all of the electrics work, and listen out for any rattles or unusual noises on the test drive.

Step 6

Take a lengthy test-drive. Look, listen and smell for anything untoward. And don't fall into the trap of paying for fuel for a seller because the needle is further south than Antarctica.

Used car inspection checklist

Front/rear bumpers

- Scratches or scuffs?
- Bumps?
- Do they line up with surrounding panels?



Front wings/bonnet

- Scratches?
- Dents?
- Do the panels all line up evenly?
- Do the headlights/fog lights line up evenly?
- Do the lights work properly?
- Are the lights chipped?

Doors

- Do all of the doors open without any creaks?
- Do the doors close smoothly without being slammed?
- Do the locks work properly?
- Are there any scratches on the outside paintwork?
- Rips, scuffs or stains on interior of doors?
- Do the windows go up and down smoothly?
- Are there any scratches on the glass, or front and rear 'screens'?
- Are there any scrapes on the bottom edges of the doors?



Rear wings/boot

- Scratches?
- Dents?
- Do all of the panels line up evenly?
- Do all of the lights work properly, including the fog light?
- Are there any dings in the boot?
- Is the exhaust damaged from poor reversing?
- Excessive soot on the bumper from the exhaust?

Wheels and tyres

- Are they all the same type of wheel?
- Are they the standard wheels for the car?
- Any kerbing?
- Are the tyres evenly worn?
- Any nicks or cracks in the edges of the tyres?
- Are the tyres all the same make or mix and match?



Interior

- Tears or rips?
- Stains or scuffs?
- Any rattly or loose seats?
- Are the seatbelts in good condition and run smoothly?
- Do the seatbelts hold tight when given a firm pull?
- Is the driver's seat excessively worn for the indicated mileage?
- Are the steering wheel and foot pedals excessively worn?
- Is the indicated mileage backed up by MoTs and service records?
- Are the carpets damp from leaky doors or sunroof?
- Holes in the dash from mobile phone holders?
- Holes in trim from aftermarket speakers and stereo?
- Does it smell of cigarettes?
- Are there any cigarette burns?
- Does every button work as it should?
- Is the steering wheel straight when wheels are aligned ahead?
- Are all of the keys present?
- Is more than one key needed for ignition, doors and boot?
- Does the air-conditioning, if fitted, work properly?
- Is the hood of a convertible in good condition and leak free?



Underneath

- Is anything hanging loose or caught on the underside?
- Any leaks?
- Rust?

Mechanicals

- Does the engine start easily and settle to an even idle?
- Does it rev freely when you press the accelerator?
- Are there any obvious noises from the engine?
- Any leaks?
- Are all of the fluids to the correct levels?
- Remove the oil filler cap with the engine off. Is the oil clean?
- Is there any white sludge – this could mean water contamination?
- Do all of the pedals work smoothly?
- Does the gear lever engage smoothly in all gears?
- Does the gearbox or clutch make any unpleasant noises?
- Does the clutch take up smoothly?
- Does the clutch slip? Accelerate hard in a high gear to test this
- Does reverse gear engage and work smoothly?
- Do the brakes work strongly?
- Do the brakes pull to one side when the pedal is pressed?
- Any noises from the suspension?
- Push down hard on the suspension. Does it settle quickly?
- Does the car roll too much in bends or feel too firm?
- Is the exhaust quiet? Are there any rattles from it?
- Is there any smoke from the exhaust?



Paperwork

- Are all of the documents present? If not, why?
 - Is there a full service history including MoTs?
 - Do the MoTs run concurrently? If not, why?
 - Does the seller's name match the details on the logbook?
 - Is any work on the car backed up by receipts?
 - Are viewing the car at the address on the logbook?
 - Do the chassis and engine numbers match those on the car?
 - Does the colour, fuel type and engine capacity match?
1. **Ask to see all paperwork and documentation.**
 - Make sure the VIN matches other VIN's on the vehicle and paperwork (original/no alterations)
 - If the car has been restored, ask for any pictures taken before, during and after
 - Check service history for repairs, oil changes and scheduled maintenance
 2. **Start the car.**
 - Check for smoke coming from the exhaust
 - Listen to the engine idle quality when cold and hot
 - Rev the engine; is it smooth? Document any noises
 - Keep it running until the engine is hot and check for exhaust smoke again

3. Take the car for a road test.

- Inspect engine performance and acceleration
- Listen for engine noise at high/low speeds
- Listen for automatic transmission/transaxle noise
- Is the automatic transmission shifting smoothly
- Listen for drive axle and transfer case bearings or gear noise/vibration
- Check the manual clutch for engagement, chatter or slippage
- Test the steering for responsiveness/smoothness/play
- Test brakes for effectiveness/operation/noise/pulling
- Check gauge operation; Speedometer/Tachometer/Odometer
- Document temp/oil/battery gauges when hot and cold
- Check the suspension on a rough road

4. Visually inspect the exterior.

- Check everywhere for rust
- Visually inspect for repairs or damage
- Check body panels for dings, dents, alignment, mismatched paint and overall paint condition
- A magnet can detect any filler used in repaired dents
- Inspect for chrome damage, alignment and improper repairs
- Open and close doors/hood/trunk/tailgate for proper operation
- Inspect grill/trim/molding for bends, dings, missing parts and proper attachment
- Inspect the windshield and side and rear windows for damages, pitting, repairs, wiper marks or cracks
- Check the mirrors condition and hinge operation

5. Check to make sure all interior/exterior lights are operational.

- Head lights, high and low beams
- Tail lights
- Brake lights
- Parking lights
- Hazard lights
- Reverse lights
- Turn signals
- License plate lights
- Fog/Driving lights
- Interior lights
- Dashboard lights
- Check for cracked or clouded lenses

6. Inspect the interior.

- Are the seat belts operational
- Test audio/alarm/speaker systems
- Test heating/ventilation/AC/defogger/defroster
- Is the clock keeping time
- Check the horn
- Inspect the lighter/power outlets condition/operation
- Inspect glove box/glove box light/hinges
- Inspect armrest/console condition/operation
- Is steering tilt/lock operational
- Check rear view mirror condition
- Check fuel filler door release
- Check that all door handles operate
- Inspect interior trim/carpet/floor mats/door panels/headliner/sun visors
- Make sure that the automatic/manual door locks are functional

7. Inspect all leather/vinyl/material.

- Check the condition of seat upholstery for wear/rips/cracks/fading/stains
- Check the dashboard/door/headliner for splitting or water damage
- Inspect sunroof/moon roof/convertible top
- Inspect convertible tops condition/operation/fit
- Check convertible top boot

8. It's time to open up the hood.

- Check for oil leaks
- Inspect air filter for oil
- Check the oil for water/sludge/clarity/level.
- Inspect timing belt/chain.
- Check all fluid levels.
- Inspect belts for wear and fraying.
- Check hoses.
- Inspect wiring.
- Inspect engine mounts.
- Look for water pump leaks.
- Pressure test radiator cap.
- Look for fuel pump leaks.
- Inspect fuel filter.

9. Kicking the tyres.

- Inspect tyres for correct size/tread depth/pressure
- Check the tyres for abnormal wear
- Inspect condition of valve stems
- Do all the tyres match
- Does the spare match
- While you're checking the spare, inspect luggage compartment for rust
- Is there a jack or tools

10. Don't forget the car's rubber parts

- Check windshield wipers condition
- Inspect interior and exterior rubber trim for splitting

