

Test driving a car – what to check

Tick these off as you go...



1. Does it start ok?

If not, it might need a new battery or alternator.



2. How's the suspension?

Some cars have firmer suspension than others, but drive over bumpy roads and listen for clunks, and feel for any unusual jolts.



3. Gauging temperature

Check the engine starts ok both from cold and warm. Has the seller warmed up the car beforehand – if so why? If the gauge gets to halfway fairly quickly and stays there, it might need a new thermostat.



4. Listen to the engine

Turn off the radio and listen to the engine. Is it running smoothly, or does it sound rough and noisy?



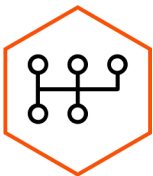
5. Check the clutch

Is it easy to find the biting point? Try accelerating up a hill at low revs (in a high gear) to check for slipping. Also try a quick getaway – is it clean, or does the clutch judder?



6. Quick as you'd expect?

Accelerate through the gears... does it keep up with traffic? If it's overly sluggish there may be issues.



7. Assess the gears

Do all gears select easily? Look out for sloppy transitions or crunching noises, and make sure the gear stick self-centres out of gear. Automatic? Are gear changes smooth and in line with road speed.



8. Test the brakes

If it is safe to do so, try going hard on the brakes. Does it stop cleanly, in a straight line without pulling to one side? Check the handbrake works well too, if you get the chance try it on a hill.



9. Check the steering

Does it operate smoothly with no odd noises? Is the power steering doing its job, or does the wheel feel heavy? If you remove your hands from the wheel, does the car pull to one side?



10. Do you like it?

Is the driving position comfortable? Would you be happy driving it for the journeys you do? Even used, a car is a big investment.