



Take this to the lot. Check every box before you talk price.

### Outside the car

- Body panels line up evenly; paint matches across panels (mismatch can mean past repairs).
- No rust around wheel wells, doors, or under the car.
- All four tires match and have even tread; check the spare.
- Lights, signals, and brake lights all work.
- Windshield and windows have no cracks or chips.

### Under the hood

- Oil is clean, not gritty or milky; no burnt smell.
- No fluid leaks under the car or on the engine.
- Belts and hoses are not cracked or fray.
- Battery terminals are clean, no heavy corrosion.

### Inside the car

- All seatbelts work and retract.
- Air conditioning and heat both work.
- Windows, locks, mirrors, and infotainment work.
- No strong smell of smoke, mold, or air freshener masking something.
- Check for water stains or damp carpet (possible flood damage).

### The test drive

- Engine starts easily; idles smoothly.
- Brakes feel firm, no grinding or pulling.
- Steering is straight; no shaking at speed.

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- Steering is straight; no shaking at speed.
- Transmission shifts smoothly with no jerks.
- No warning lights stay on after start-up.

### **Before you sign**

- Get a vehicle history report and check for accidents or title brands.
- Ask for a pre-purchase inspection by your own mechanic.
- Get the out-the-door price in writing, with every fee listed.
- If financing, get the APR, term, and total cost in writing.
- Never feel pressured to sign on the spot.