



SLAYTON LAW, PLC

BANKRUPTCY AND DEBT RELIEF

USED VEHICLE BUYING GUIDE

Exterior

Sticker: Check to see if it is sold “as is” or with a warranty?

Look at each body panel, wheel wells, doors, roof and fenders:

- For scratches and dents
- Rust, especially at bottom of doors and wheel wells
- For misalignment of panels
- Check paint for same shade on each panel: check inside hood and trunk for other shades
- If you suspect a dent was filled, put a magnet (on your phone) on it to see if it's metal or filler (you want metal)

Doors: Open and close all doors, hatch back, hood, and sunroof. Gently lift and let go each door - look for them being loose on their hinges (sign of wear). Inspect rubber seals for tears and rot (especially sunroof).

Windows: Inspect all windows for cracks or chips.

Suspension: Walk around and see if car is level at each side/corner. Bounce each corner – it should rebound only once (it should not keep moving up and down)

Tires:

- Check wear to see if all four tires are the same - even across the width of the tread and the same on the left and right sides of the car.
- Grab the top of each front tire and tug back and forth. If you feel play in it or hear a clunking/ticking sound, the wheel bearings or suspension may be shot.
- Ask if tires have been rotated.
- Heavy wear on the outside shoulder of the front tires, at the edge of the sidewall may indicate the car has been driven hard.
- Tires that have been driven while overinflated tend to wear more in the middle than on the sides.
- Chronically underinflated tires show more wear on the sides.
- Cupped tires, those that are worn unevenly along the tread's circumference, may be a sign of a problem with the steering, suspension, or brakes.
- Inspect depth of treads: Insert a quarter into the tread groove, with Washington's head down. If you can see the top of his head, the tire should be replaced.
- Examine the sidewalls for scuffing, cracks, or bulges, and look on the edge of each rim for dents or cracks.
- Check that the spare is present and in good shape and that the proper jack and lug wrench are present.

Lights: stand outside and ask the sales person to turn them on so you can see all of them working, including brights, regular, taillights and reverse. Make sure lights don't have fog or cracks. None should be missing.

Interior

Odor: Musty or moldy smell could indicate leaks. Check lighter and ashtray for evidence of smoker. Some odors are impossible to get rid of – if you don't like the smell, maybe find another car.

Seats: Sit in all of them. Look for rips or tears. Try all seat adjustments to make sure they work. Make sure seat height will work for a short girl 😊

Pedals: Check for wear and overuse. Make sure rubber isn't too worn.

Instruments/Controls: Turn on w/o starting engine. All the warning lights—including the "Check engine" light—should illuminate for a few seconds and go off when you start the engine.

- Note if engine starts easily from cold.
- Note if engine idles smoothly.
- Try every lever and control.
- Check heater full blast.
- Check air conditioner to make sure it gets cold quickly.

Radio

- Test AM and FM
- Test CD player
- Test MP3 player
- See if there is an electrical plug

Roof: Check the headliner and roof trim for stains or sags to see if water is leaking through the sunroof, ill-fitting doors, or windows. If equipped with a sunroof or moonroof, check to see if it opens and closes properly and seals well when shut.

Mats: Check under mats for wet spots or stains.

Hatch/Trunk: Use your nose as well as your eyes. Sniff and look for signs of water entry. See if the carpeting feels wet or smells musty, and check the spare-tire well for water or rust.

Engine – Test When Cool

Overview: Look first at the general condition of the engine bay. Dirt and dust are normal, but be wary if you see oil splattered about or on the pavement under the engine compartment. Also watch for a battery covered with corrosion, or wires and hoses hanging loose.

Hoses and belts: Squeeze the various rubber hoses running to the radiator, air conditioner, and other parts. The rubber should be firm and supple, not rock-hard, cracked, or mushy. Feel the drive belts to determine whether they are frayed.

Fluids: The owner's manual will point out where to look to check all fluid levels.

- Engine oil should be dark brown or black, but not gritty. If the oil is honey-colored, it was just changed. If the dipstick has water droplets on it or gray or foamy oil, it could indicate a cracked engine block or blown head gasket, two serious problems.
- Transmission fluid should be pinkish, not brown, and smell like oil, with no "burnt" odor. The dipstick shouldn't leave visible metal particles on the rag, another sign of a serious problem. Check the automatic-transmission fluid with the engine warmed up and running. On some, the dipstick has two sets of marks for checking when the engine is either cold or warm.
- Power-steering and brake-fluid levels should be within the safe zone.

Radiator: Look into the plastic reservoir that's connected by a rubber hose to the radiator. The coolant should be greenish or orange, not a milky or rusty color. Greenish stains on the outside of the radiator are a sign of pinhole leaks.

Battery: Some "maintenance free" batteries have a built-in charge indicator. A green indicator usually means the battery is in good

shape; yellow or black usually means it is dying or dead. These indicators reveal the condition of just one cell and may not give an accurate reading on the health of the whole battery. If the battery has filler caps, wipe off the top with a rag, then carefully pry off or unscrew the caps to look at the liquid electrolyte level. A low level may mean that the battery has been working too hard. A mechanic can check out the charging system and do a “load test” on the battery.

Under the Vehicle

Leaks: If you can find where a car was usually parked, see if that part of the garage floor or driveway is marked from old puddles of gasoline, oil, coolant, or transmission fluid. Clear water that drips from under the car on a hot day is probably just water condensed from the air conditioner. If you see oil drips, oily leaks, or green or red fluid on the engine or the pavement beneath the car, it’s not a good sign.

Tailpipe: Feel the tailpipe for residue. If it’s black and greasy, it means burnt oil. Tailpipe smudge should be dry and dark gray. While some rust is normal, heavy rust might be OK but could mean a new exhaust system might be needed.

Independent Mechanic Inspection

Before you close the deal, have it scrutinized by a repair shop that routinely does diagnostic work. A dealer should have no problem lending you the car to have it inspected as long as you leave identification. If a salesperson tells you that an independent inspection is not necessary because the dealership has already done it, insist on having your mechanic look at it.

- A thorough diagnosis should cost around \$100, but check the price in advance. Ask the mechanic for a written report detailing the car’s condition, noting any problems found and the cost to repair them. You can then use the report in the negotiation with the seller.

- If you don't know of a repair shop with which you feel comfortable, try to get a referral from someone you trust. You can also ask for the name of a good shop at a local auto-parts store. If you can't get referrals, you can find shops on the Yellow Pages website or at the Car Care Council's website (www.carcare.org). This is an organization supported by the auto aftermarket industry, but there are no performance criteria for shops listed on the site.
- To check for complaints about any shops you aren't familiar with, research them at the Better Business Bureau's website. Members of the American Automobile Association (AAA) can use one of its recommended facilities.
- If you're visiting a shop for the first time, look for certificates or window decals from AAA or the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE). AAA-certified garages must meet certain quality standards. The ASE grants certificates to mechanics who pass exams in any of eight areas of expertise. The institute does not certify shops as a whole, but if 75 percent of the employees are ASE-certified, the shop can carry the seal.