

VISUAL INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Does the engine oil look dark? Are there tiny pieces of metal that shine in the light? Has it been freshly changed?

Metal flakes in the oil can indicate motor damage.

If possible, open the oil cap on the engine and look into it. Is it clean?

If it is gummed up the engine was not well maintained.

Examine the engine for cracks or leaks.

Cracked engines can typically only be replaced, not repaired.

Are there any fluid puddles underneath?

Small water puddles are often the AC condensation which is normal. If it leaks a colored liquid, there could be a problem.

Does the transmission fluid on the dip stick have a proper pinkish color?

If the fluid seems dark or discolored, there could be a problem.

Turn the ignition switch and examine the dash. All lights should illuminate when the key is turned, then go out after a few seconds.

If the "check engine light" does not illuminate at all, it is possible that the bulb or chip has been removed and the seller might be illegally covering up a major problem.

Listen to the engine while it is running. Do you hear any uncommon noises?

Odd noises might indicate trouble.

Is there any dark smoke coming from the exhaust?

Dark smoke usually indicates problems.

Are there any odd smells coming from the engine?

Burning smells might indicate problems.

Does the vehicle's body have damage?

Small dents can be repaired, major body damage can be costly to fix.

Are there any empty bottles of fluid in the interior or trunk?

This might indicate a leak that the seller is covering up.

Does the paint show signs of fading or rust?

Check ashtray for cigarette butts.

Smoked-in vehicles often smell poorly, require more cleaning time, and may deter future buyers.

Is the mileage misaligned on the dash?

If the numbers are uneven, it's possible that the mileage has been rolled back illegally. This does not apply to newer cars with digital gauges.

Are any of the digital gauges flashing or blinking?

This may indicate removed computer chips from the dash in order to illegally lower mileage..

If the vehicle has a clock, is the time is correct?

If not, the seller may have recently disconnected the battery terminal in order to reset a check engine light.

Does the car's VIN# match the title's VIN#?

If not the seller may not have actual ownership of the vehicle.