



## AUTO DATA UK – VEHICLE BUYING CHECKLIST (PRIVATE & TRADE)

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This checklist can be used when viewing any vehicle.

Some checks apply to private sales only and are clearly marked.

Dealer purchases have different consumer protections.

### VEHICLE DETAILS (Fill in Before Viewing)

Registration Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Advertised Mileage: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Mileage (At Viewing): \_\_\_\_\_

Price: £ \_\_\_\_\_

Seller Name / Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Seller Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Viewing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Viewed: \_\_\_\_\_

MOT Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Previous Owners (Advertised): \_\_\_\_\_

### BEFORE YOU GO (Research & Protection)

- Read the full advert carefully
- Check for vague wording such as “no time wasters” or “priced to sell quickly”
- Compare mileage with vehicle age
- Check MOT history online
- Review previous MOT advisories
- Confirm service history mentioned
- Confirm number of keys included
- Confirm V5C logbook is present
- Ask if there is outstanding finance

## IMPORTANT – RUN A VEHICLE HISTORY CHECK

Run a full vehicle history check before viewing

If you are serious about buying the vehicle, run a full history check to confirm:

- Outstanding finance
- Insurance write-off status (Cat S / Cat N)
- Stolen vehicle records
- Mileage discrepancies
- MOT history records and advisories
- Number of previous keepers
- Previous plate changes
- Imported vehicle status
- Scrapped marker records
- Colour changes
- Tax status
- And more

A proper vehicle history check gives you the full background of the vehicle before you travel.

Vehicle history checks can be completed at: [www.autodatauk.co.uk](http://www.autodatauk.co.uk)

Never rely solely on the seller's word.

## SAFETY WHEN VIEWING

- Take someone with you (ideally two people)
- Take someone knowledgeable about cars if possible
- Never meet in isolated car parks or lay-bys
- Never view a vehicle in the dark
- Avoid viewing in heavy rain
- Ask the seller not to warm the vehicle before you arrive
- Always start the vehicle from cold

You must never feel rushed.

If a seller says:

- “I've got others coming soon”
- “You need to decide quickly”
- “I've only got a short time”

**Treat this as a red flag.**

You must always be allowed time to inspect properly.

## PRIVATE SALE CHECKS (PRIVATE SELLER ONLY)

- V5C logbook present
- Seller name matches V5C
- Viewing address matches V5C address
- Number of previous owners on V5C matches vehicle history check
- Seller is not claiming to sell "on behalf of someone else"

If the vehicle is not registered to the person selling it at the address you are viewing it from, it may indicate:

- A trader posing as a private seller
- An attempt to avoid offering warranty
- An attempt to avoid tax obligations

**Proceed with extreme caution.**

## TRADE / DEALER CHECKS

Trade sellers may operate in different ways:

- From a forecourt or fixed premises
- From home by appointment
- As online-based traders

You must confirm they are genuinely operating as a trader.

- Confirm business name
- Request a proper trade receipt
- Ensure invoice includes business details
- Confirm consumer rights apply

When buying from a trader, you are protected under consumer law.

A trader cannot remove your statutory rights.

If a seller claims to be private but the vehicle is clearly part of multiple sales, proceed carefully.

## DOCUMENTS TO CHECK

- Service book present
- Service invoices present
- Electronic service record visible (if applicable)
- Manuals present
- Locking wheel nut key present
- All keys present

If service history is claimed but no documentation is available, this is a red flag.

Never accept “we’ll forward it later.”

Do not buy without documentation in front of you.

## KEY CHECK

- All keys physically present
- Spare key present (if advertised)
- Keys not damaged
- Central locking works from each key
- Remote buttons working properly

Replacement keys can be expensive.

## VIN & IDENTITY CHECK (VERY IMPORTANT)

- VIN on windscreen matches V5C
- VIN on door shut matches V5C
- VIN matches vehicle history check
- Registration plates match V5C
- Mileage consistent with MOT history

If VIN numbers do not match — walk away immediately.

## EXTERIOR CHECK

- Body panels aligned evenly
- Paint colour consistent
- No signs of overspray
- No major dents or rust
- Windscreen free from cracks or large chips
- All lights working
- Tyres legal tread depth (minimum 1.6mm)
- Tyres evenly worn
- Spare wheel or inflation kit present
- No excessive exhaust smoke
- Underbody not excessively corroded

## INTERIOR CHECK

- Seats not excessively worn
- Steering wheel wear consistent with mileage
- Pedals not excessively worn
- All seatbelts working
- No warning lights on dashboard
- Windows operate correctly
- Mirrors adjust correctly
- Air conditioning working
- Heating working
- Radio/infotainment working
- No damp or mould smells
- Parcel shelf present
- Floor mats present

## ENGINE & MECHANICAL CHECK

- Engine starts easily from cold
- No loud knocking noises
- No warning lights remain on
- No fluid leaks under vehicle
- Oil level correct
- Oil not milky
- Coolant level correct
- No excessive smoke from exhaust

## TEST DRIVE CHECK

- Clutch smooth (manual)
- Gears change smoothly
- Automatic gearbox changes smoothly
- Vehicle drives straight
- Steering centred
- Brakes responsive
- No unusual noises over bumps
- Handbrake holds vehicle

## RED FLAGS – DO NOT IGNORE

- Seller rushing you
- Seller pressuring with “others coming”
- Seller selling “on behalf of someone else”
- Service history claimed but no proof
- Missing service book or invoices
- Missing keys
- Keys damaged or not working
- Seller refuses independent inspection
- Seller refuses test drive
- Price far below market value
- Logbook missing
- VIN numbers do not match

If something does not feel right — walk away.

## DEPOSITS – IMPORTANT

- Never leave a deposit unless you are 100% committed to buying the vehicle
- Only leave a deposit if you cannot take the vehicle away immediately

A deposit is a holding deposit only.

Never leave a deposit before having an independent inspection carried out.

If you leave a deposit before inspection and then decide not to buy, you will likely lose that money.

## INDEPENDENT VEHICLE INSPECTION

- Consider arranging a professional vehicle inspection

An inspection is excellent value for money.

It can:

- Highlight hidden issues
- Give you bargaining power
- Help negotiate repairs
- Help negotiate a price reduction
- Confirm the vehicle is sound

If no issues are found, it provides peace of mind.

If the seller refuses an independent inspection — treat this as a major red flag.

## AFTER VIEWING

- Compare vehicle to others
- Re-check full history report
- Do not rush your decision
- Negotiate based on issues found
- Always get a written receipt