



**Is the bodywork free from dents, scratches or other marks?**

Squat down on your haunches and look along the sides of the car to check for dents. Ripples, small craters or swirly scratches in the paintwork indicate it has been given a quick top coat re-spray.

**Pull back rubber seals and lift door handles right up. Are the colours the same (but less faded)?**

If the colour under the rubber looks older than the rest or if there is a build up of paint where there has been an overspray it has been repaired. This tells you the car has been involved in some kind of accident, but it may be minor. You only need to worry if it looks like the car may have been in a major accident (see other checks below).

**Do both bumpers and all the cars panel colours match? Are all the gaps between the panels (known as shut lines) consistent and evenly spaced?**

Any big gaps may mean the car has had a poor quality repair after a fairly major accident.

**Look at the number plates and the reflective mirrors in the back of the headlight. Do they all match?**

If one headlight is darker than the other or the number plates don't match, it may have been in an accident.

**Open the boot and the bonnet. Does all the metal look the same colour?**

Different colours tell you there may have been major bodywork repairs.

**Is the windscreen free from major cracks or chips?**

**Are all the locks the same?**

If not, ask why not. Changed locks can mean the car was stolen or broken into.

**Paintwork.**

Never view cars in the rain or twilight as either condition makes it harder to spot defects.

If paintwork has white marks that rub off, it is probably old polish that hasn't been removed. Whilst it looks bad, it is a good sign because the car will usually clean up well.

**Is there any rust on the car?**

Look at all the bodywork, along the sills, under the bonnet and in the boot. Significant rust is to be avoided.

**Do all the controls and electronics work?**

Check heating controls (both hot and cold), radio, windscreen wipers, all windows and sunroof, central locking and alarm.

**Do all the inside and outside lights work?**

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**Area =** Gear lever

**What to look for =** Check that the car engages reverse easily. The change can be awkward. When cornering in 2<sup>nd</sup> gear you may also hear a clicking noise from the gear lever area.

**What it means =** If it is difficult to select reverse, or there is a clicking during 2<sup>nd</sup> gear corners, the gearbox may need an overhaul.

**What to do =** Negotiate a £500 discount or have the repair completed before purchase.

**Area =** Steering

**What to look for =** During the test drive test that the steering is light and returns to its centre point easily, having pulled out of a side turning. Test the steering remains light when parking and moving at under 1 m.p.h.

**What it means =** If the steering is heavy at slow speeds and when parking or doesn't return to centre, the electronic steering rack needs replacing

**What to do =** Negotiate a £1,500 discount or have the repair completed

**Area =** Tailgate water build up

**What to look for =** If the car has been standing in the rain, be prepared that when you open the tailgate, a build up of water can pour into the boot

**What it means =** Accept the fault or don't buy this type of car

**What to do =** This is a design rather than manufacturing fault and there is no modification.

**Area =** Lambda sensor

**What to look for =** 1) Check that the engine management light comes on with the ignition and goes out a few seconds after you start the engine. If the management light does not come on with the ignition, it may have burnt out or been removed to hide a bigger fault. 2) Drive the car to detect any poor running (the idle revs being erratic or the acceleration being lumpy).

**What it means =** If the car runs poorly and the engine management light is on, the problem is the Lamba sensor

**What to do =** Negotiate a £100 discount or have the repair completed.

**Area =** Cam belt

**What to look for =** Check the paperwork to see if the cam belt has been change on schedule. On most engines the cam belt must be changed within 6 years or 75,000 miles.

**What it means =** If the cam belt and associated parts (such as water pump and tensioner) have not been changed, and the mileage is over these boundaries, the cam belt is likely to fail soon. Usually the engine has to be replaced or at least re-built after a cam belt failure.

**What to do =** Ensure that the cam belt is changed before the car is driven anywhere if it is close to its interval. Changing the belt will cost £475 (as part of a 12,000 mile service).

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