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# I'm ready to start looking at a car

When looking for a car take time to check out several cars before you select the one you want. Here are some tips on what's hot, and what's not! Remember to record what you find, and use the information to bargain down the price.

## Inspection Checklist

Where possible always inspect in bright light and in dry conditions. A good way to look at car bodywork is to stand back from the car (front and rear) and look down the side of the vehicle. This will highlight small dents and creases. Also look at the gaps between the body panels and doors – they should be equal in width and flush.

- Accident damage or rust**  
Check inside the boot, the floor wells, doors and lower sills for red or other dark stains, dimpled or bubbled paint. Use a soft fridge magnet to check panels for plastic body filler. A vinyl roof may conceal rust or other damage.
- Hail damage**  
Found mainly on horizontal panel surfaces (e.g. bonnet, roof, boot lid). If hail damage is evident, for insurance check with your insurance company - they may have conditions.
- Panel fitment**  
Loose panels may indicate accident damage or that the car has been regularly driven over rough roads.

- Doors and boot lid/tailgate**  
Catches should close firmly. Rubber seals can perish over time so check these.
- Paint**  
Look for colour variation, overspraying, dents or ripples.
- Upholstery, trim and carpets**  
Check for wear and tear.

## Under the bonnet

- Engine number and VIN (vehicle identification number) / body number**  
These numbers must match the numbers on the registration document. Check for signs of interference - scratches, grind marks, drill holes etc. They could indicate illegal interference with the numbers.
- Year and month of manufacture**  
Check these are as advertised by inspecting the built date plate. See owner Manual for location.
- Engine oil**  
Check for correct oil level and oil condition - for contamination – milky appearance (oil & water mixed) indicates blown head gasket or cylinder head problem.