

Pre-Purchase Inspection Checklist

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Walk-around inspection for used Japanese cars in Los Angeles

Year / Make / Model:

Mileage:

VIN:

Date:

Tick OK or Issue for each item. Page 1 is the walk-around: inspect in daylight before the engine is started, and bring a flashlight and paper towels.

Documents and History	OK	Issue
Title is clean (no salvage, rebuilt, or flood brand) and confirmed with the California DMV	☐	☐
VIN matches on the title, dashboard, and driver door jamb	☐	☐
Seller provides a valid California smog certificate (required for most cars more than four model years old)	☐	☐
Service records on hand, including timing belt and transmission fluid history	☐	☐
No open recalls on the VIN at nhtsa.gov/recalls , including airbag recalls	☐	☐
Imported JDM car: export certificate and auction sheet mileage match the odometer	☐	☐
Exterior and Body	OK	Issue
Paint color and panel gaps match on every panel	☐	☐
No overspray inside door jambs, the trunk, or the fuel door	☐	☐
No welds or bends on the shock towers or radiator support	☐	☐
No rust on the underbody, subframe, or brake lines (look closely at cars kept near the coast)	☐	☐
Catalytic converter present and undamaged (common theft target on Prius models)	☐	☐
Windshield free of cracks; headlights, brake lights, and turn signals all work	☐	☐
Under the Hood (Engine Cold)	OK	Issue
Oil level is correct, with no milky residue under the oil cap	☐	☐
Coolant is clean and full, with no sweet smell or crusty residue	☐	☐
No oil leaks around the valve cover, oil pan, or timing cover	☐	☐
Belts and hoses are free of cracks and bulges	☐	☐
Battery terminals are clean and the battery date is recent	☐	☐
OBD2 scan shows no stored or pending codes, and readiness monitors are complete	☐	☐
Interior and Electronics	OK	Issue
No warning lights stay on after startup (check engine, ABS, airbag, TPMS)	☐	☐
A/C blows cold within a few minutes	☐	☐
No musty smell, damp carpet, or silt under the seats (signs of flood damage)	☐	☐
Wear on the pedal rubber, steering wheel, and driver's seat bolster matches the odometer	☐	☐
Windows, locks, sunroof, infotainment, and backup camera all work	☐	☐
Tires, Brakes, and Suspension	OK	Issue
All four tires match in brand and tread depth	☐	☐
DOT date codes show tires under six years old	☐	☐
Brake pads are thick enough and rotors are smooth, with no grooves or lip	☐	☐
Each corner rebounds once and settles when pressed down (no repeated bouncing)	☐	☐

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Cold start, test drive, and model-specific checks for used Japanese cars

Page 2 covers the cold start and test drive. Ask the seller not to start the car before you arrive, and drive for at least 20 minutes on surface streets and the freeway.

Cold Start and Test Drive	OK	Issue
Engine starts easily, with no metallic rattle, rough idle, or knocking	☐	☐
No blue or white smoke from the exhaust	☐	☐
Brakes feel firm in stop-and-go traffic, with no pulling, grinding, or vibration	☐	☐
No steering wheel vibration at freeway speed (30 to 65 mph); car tracks straight	☐	☐
Steering has no play and the suspension stays quiet over bumps	☐	☐
Temperature gauge stays normal the whole time	☐	☐
No new leaks under the car after the drive	☐	☐

Transmission and CVT	OK	Issue
Shifts are smooth, with no slipping, flaring, or harsh engagement	☐	☐
CVT models: no whine, shudder, or hesitation when pulling away from a stop	☐	☐
Transmission fluid is not dark or burnt-smelling (where a dipstick is fitted)	☐	☐
No clicking from the CV axles during tight, slow turns	☐	☐

Hybrid System (Prius, Camry Hybrid, RAV4 Hybrid, Lexus Hybrids)	OK	Issue
READY light comes on with no hybrid system warning messages	☐	☐
Car switches smoothly between electric and gas power	☐	☐
Hybrid battery cooling vent (usually near the rear seat) is clear of dust and pet hair	☐	☐
Hybrid battery health tested by a shop before you buy	☐	☐

Model-Specific Checks	OK	Issue
Older Toyota and Honda V6 engines: timing belt replaced on schedule (ask for the receipt)	☐	☐
CVTs from Nissan, Honda, Subaru, and Toyota: records of fluid changes	☐	☐
Some late-2000s Toyota 2.4L four-cylinders: oil consumption between changes	☐	☐
Some 2000s Nissan engines: no timing chain rattle on cold start	☐	☐
Older Subaru 2.5L engines: no head gasket seepage or coolant loss	☐	☐
Records of the 30,000, 60,000, and 90,000-mile services	☐	☐

Verdict: ☐ Buy ☐ Negotiate ☐ Walk away

Notes:

Want a professional opinion? Book an inspection with the ASE certified mechanics at Blu Automotive Repair & Maintenance before you buy. Call (310) 513-0618 or visit bluautorepair.com.