Used BMW X5 inspection checklist

What to check on a used X5, what a problem looks like, and when to walk away.

COVERS **E70** 2007–2013 | **F15** 2013–2018 | **G05** 2018 on

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☐ **Tick it** if it's fine. **Cross it** if it isn't, and note what you found so you can price it into your offer.

! **Safety critical:** affects how safely it drives or protects you in a crash. Best to have a mechanic check it before you buy.

$ **Negotiate:** costs money to fix, from wear to major repairs. Get a quote and take it off the price.

1 Exterior

- ☐ **Panel gaps.** Walk around the body in good light and check the panel gaps and paint colour match across every panel and door jamb. Uneven gaps or a slightly different paint shade usually point to a crash repair. $
- ☐ **Wheels.** Look over the alloy wheels, especially large sport rims, for kerbing damage or buckling. A badly kerbed wheel can cause a vibration you'll feel on the test drive. $
- ☐ **Sunroof seal.** If fitted, open the panoramic sunroof fully and check it slides smoothly and reseals with no gap. A leaking seal here lets water into the headlining and electronics below. $
- ☐ **Towbar mounting.** If a towbar is fitted, check it's bolted solidly to the body with no rust or cracking around the mounts. A poorly fitted towbar can fail under load or affect crash structure. !

2 Under the bonnet

- ☐ **Coolant level.** Check the coolant in the expansion tank sits at the mark and looks a clean colour, not rusty or oily. A low or discoloured level points to a leak somewhere in the cooling system. $
- ☐ **Oil level.** Pull the dipstick, or check the digital level on models without one, and confirm the oil sits in range rather than above the top mark. A level that keeps rising or sits too high can point to a dilution problem. $
- ☐ **Oil filter housing.** Look at the plastic oil filter housing on top of the engine for oil or coolant weeping around its edges. Staining here points to a failed gasket seal that's a common repair cost. $
- ☐ **Cold start rattle.** Ask to start the engine from cold and listen closely for a metallic rattle that fades after a few seconds. A rattle on every cold start points to timing chain wear. A rattle that keeps recurring on each cold start is more serious than a one-off. $
- ☐ **Diesel turbo pipes.** Diesel: look inside the large rubber intake pipes for oily residue and listen for a loud whistle or watch for blue smoke on startup. Oil in the pipes or a screaming whistle points to a failing turbo. $

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Rear air suspension.** Check the rear ride height looks even side to side, not sagging after the car's been parked overnight. Sagging or uneven height points to a failing air suspension component. Sagging after sitting overnight often means a slow air leak. $
- ☐ **Underbody rust.** Crouch down and check the floor pans and suspension mounting points for rust or fresh welds. Flaking metal or a patch of new underseal in one spot usually hides a repaired impact. !
- ☐ **Tyre wear.** Check all four tyres for even wear across the tread, confirming they match the size on the door-frame sticker. xDrive models need matching tyres, as mismatched sizes strain the drivetrain. $
- ☐ **Tyre age.** Check the sidewall date code on all four tyres and confirm none are older than about six years. A tyre can look fine but be unsafe once it's old and hardened. $
- ☐ **Brake discs.** Look through the wheel spokes at the brake discs for deep grooves or a lipped outer edge, and check how much pad material remains. Thin pads or scored discs are an upcoming cost to budget for. $

4 Interior and electrics

- ☐ **Warning lights.** Turn the ignition on without starting and check the engine, ABS, airbag and suspension warning lights all illuminate then go out once running. A light that stays on needs an explanation before you buy. !
- ☐ **Seatbelts.** Pull each seatbelt out fully and let it retract, checking it latches firmly with no fraying in the webbing. A belt that doesn't retract smoothly or is frayed should be treated as unsafe. !
- ☐ **Third-row seats.** If fitted, fold and unfold the third-row seats electrically or by hand and check they lock flat properly. Stiff or jamming mechanisms suggest a worn or faulty folding motor. $
- ☐ **Electronic parking brake.** Apply and release the electronic parking brake switch and check it engages and disengages promptly without an error message. A fault here can leave the brake stuck on or not holding. $

! **Stay safe.** Never go under a car held up only by a jack, and never open the radiator or coolant cap on a hot engine. Keep hands, hair and loose clothing clear of fans and belts when the engine is running, and do checks under the bonnet with it switched off where you can. On the test drive, hold a current licence, confirm the car is registered and insured, obey road rules, and only brake hard when the road behind is clear. Meet in a safe, public-facing place, take someone with you, and don't carry large amounts of cash to a viewing.

5 Test drive

- [ ] **Automatic gearbox.** Drive off from a stop and through all gears, feeling for a shudder, flare or delayed thump into gear. Judder at low speed is a warning sign. Judder at low speed is a warning sign. $
- [ ] **Transfer case shudder.** AWD: drive at low speed on full lock, such as a tight car park turn, and feel and listen for a shudder or clunk from underneath. A shudder on tight slow turns points to a worn transfer case. A shudder or clunk on tight slow turns is a warning sign. $
- [ ] **Steering feel.** At highway speed, check the car tracks straight with no wandering or need for constant correction. Wandering or notchy movement off-centre can mean worn steering components. !
- [ ] **Braking.** Brake firmly from speed on a quiet road and feel for shaking through the pedal or the car pulling to one side. Shaking usually means warped brake discs, which affect stopping distance. !

6 Documentation

- [ ] **Service history.** Check the logbook or invoices show services done on time, including timing chain and cooling system work if due. Gaps in servicing are a strong bargaining point. $
- [ ] **Registration.** Check the car's registration status online through your state's rego check to confirm it's current and not written off.

What this guide can't tell you about the X5 you're looking at

9+
recalls on X5s built since 2007*

18
common faults reported on X5s built since 2007*

3,831
owner complaints on X5s built since 2007*

Money owing, stolen or a write-off?
A tidy car can hide all three.

What's each fault worth?
Shufti's negotiation coach turns it into leverage.

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* Shufti analysis, November 2026, of official recall notices, complaints lodged by vehicle owners with vehicle safety regulators, and independent reviews and owner forums. Faults are counted when two or more independent sources report them.

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