Used Holden Astra inspection checklist

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

COVERS **BK hatch** 2016–2020 **BL sedan** 2017–2020

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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

- ☐ **Bodywork.** Walk around and check panel gaps are even and paint colour matches across all panels and door jambs. Overspray on rubber seals or trim means a panel has been repainted. Uneven gaps usually mean a panel has been refitted after a crash. $
- ☐ **Rust.** Check the sills, wheel arches, door bottoms and tailgate for bubbling paint or rust. This is more likely on a car that's spent time near the coast. Rust starting at the bottom of doors often means it's eating through from the inside out. $
- ☐ **Headlights.** Turn on every light and check each one works and the lenses are clear. Cloudy lenses dim the beam at night. Cloudy lenses can often be polished back to clear, but check the price before accepting it. $
- ☐ **VIN plate.** Find the VIN plate in a door frame or under the bonnet and check it's intact and matches the paperwork. It should look original, not re-stamped or loose. A tampered plate can mean the car's identity or history has been altered.

2 Under the bonnet

- ☐ **Engine oil.** Pull the dipstick and check the oil sits between the marks and looks brown, not black or gritty. Black, gritty oil suggests servicing has been skipped. Oil well above the top mark can point to a leak elsewhere being masked. $
- ☐ **Idle quality.** Start the engine from cold and listen at idle for a whistling or hissing noise along with a rough, uneven idle. A whistle alongside a lumpy idle points to a failed valve in the engine's breather system. $
- ☐ **Coolant.** Check the coolant sits at the mark in the overflow bottle and is brightly coloured, not rusty or oily. Oily coolant can mean a blown head gasket, a costly repair. Frequent top-ups point to a slow leak somewhere in the system. $
- ☐ **Drive belt.** With the engine off, look at the drive belt for cracks, fraying or glazing on its surface. A cracked or frayed belt can fail without warning. Glazing (a shiny surface) means the belt is hardened and due for replacement. $

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Tyre tread.** Check tread depth on all four tyres is above the wear bars and wears evenly across each one. Wear on one edge only suggests the wheels are out of alignment. Uneven wear across the tyre can also point to worn suspension parts. $
- ☐ **Front suspension bushes.** With the car stationary, rock the front of the car and listen for a creaking or knocking noise from underneath, then check for this again on the test drive over bumps. A creak over small bumps points to a worn or de-bonded bush at the front. $
- ☐ **Chassis rust.** Look at the floor and around the suspension mounts for rust, bent metal, fresh welds or a patch of new black coating in one spot. Any of these can mean hidden crash damage. Fresh undercoating in just one spot is often used to hide repair work. !
- ☐ **Brake discs.** Look at the visible edge of each brake disc through the wheel for deep grooves or a raised lip. A heavily grooved disc means it's due for replacement. A raised outer lip means the disc is worn thinner than it should be. !

4 Interior and electrics

- ☐ **Warning lights.** Turn the key to "on" and check every dash light comes on then goes out once the engine is running. An airbag, brake or engine light that stays lit needs an explanation. A light that's been taped over or a bulb removed is a red flag. !
- ☐ **Seatbelts.** Pull each seatbelt out fully and let it retract, then click it into the buckle. It should move smoothly with no fraying or stiffness. A belt that doesn't retract properly may not hold you firmly in a crash. !
- ☐ **Air con.** Run the air con for a minute or two and check it blows cold air without a musty smell. A weak or warm flow can mean the system needs regassing. A musty smell often means the cabin filter is overdue. $
- ☐ **Electrics.** Test the touchscreen, Bluetooth pairing, windows, mirrors and reversing camera if fitted. A dead screen or sensor can be costly to fix. $

! **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.** Automatic: drive through all gears and feel for slipping, delay or a thump when shifting into Drive or Reverse. Shifts should feel smooth and quick. A jerky or shuddering shift between gears points to a transmission problem. $
- [ ] **Manual clutch.** Manual: in a higher gear at about 50 km/h, floor the accelerator briefly and feel if the revs rise faster than the car's speed. If so, the clutch is slipping. A clutch that slips under load will need replacing soon, which is a big cost. $
- [ ] **Brakes.** Brake firmly from speed on an empty road; the car should stop straight with no pulling, pulsing or grinding. A grinding noise means the pads have worn down to metal. !
- [ ] **Steering.** Check the car tracks straight with no wandering, and the steering feels consistent at all speeds without going heavy or light suddenly. A whine or the assistance cutting in and out points to a power steering fault. $
- [ ] **Engine mounts.** Sit at idle in Drive and feel for heavy shaking through the floor or steering wheel, then pull away gently and listen for a clunk. A clunk when you pull away or shift into Reverse often means a worn engine mount. $

6 Documentation

- [ ] **Seller's ID.** Check the seller's ID matches the name on the rego papers, and that the VIN matches across the papers and the VIN plate on the car. Any mismatch needs an explanation before you pay anything.
- [ ] **Service history.** Look through the logbook for stamps on time with matching receipts, and check the odometer readings climb steadily with no gaps. Missing stamps or a sudden jump in kilometres can mean skipped services or odometer tampering. $
- [ ] **Roadworthy certificate.** Check the registration status online and confirm a current roadworthy certificate is supplied if your state requires one for a private sale. An unregistered car or missing certificate can mean extra cost and delay before you can drive it home. $

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

3

common faults reported on Astras built since 2016*

882

owner complaints on the related Chevrolet Cruze, 2016–2019*

Money owing, stolen or a write-off?

A tidy car can hide all three.

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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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