Used Holden Barina inspection checklist

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

COVERS **TK** 2005–2011 **TM** 2011–2018

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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

- ☐ **Rust.** Check the sills, wheel arches and door bottoms for bubbling paint or rust. These small hatches often sit outside for years in all weather. Rust starting at the bottom of doors usually means it's eating through from inside. $
- ☐ **Crash repair.** Run your eye along the panel gaps and paint colour, which should be even all round with no overspray on seals or trim. Uneven gaps or overspray on rubber usually means a panel has been refitted after a crash. $
- ☐ **Headlights.** Turn on every light and check each one works and the lenses are clear, not hazy or yellowed. Cloudy lenses dim the beam at night and can usually be polished, but check the price first. $
- ☐ **VIN plate.** Find the VIN plate in a door frame or under the bonnet and check it's intact and matches the paperwork. A tampered or loose 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. $
- ☐ **Coolant.** Check the coolant sits at its mark in the overflow bottle and is brightly coloured, not rusty or oily. Rusty or oily coolant, or frequent top-ups, points to a cracked plastic housing or hose leak. !
- ☐ **Timing belt service.** Ask when the timing belt was last replaced, as older engines use a belt rather than a chain. A belt left past its interval can snap and wreck the engine. $
- ☐ **Valve cover leak.** Look at the top and sides of the engine for oily residue around the valve cover gasket. A damp, oily film here means a seal has started weeping and will need replacing. $

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. $
- ☐ **Chassis rust.** Look at the floor and suspension mounts for rust, bent metal, fresh welds or a patch of new coating in one spot. Fresh undercoating in just one spot often hides repair work. !
- ☐ **Front brake wear.** Look through the wheel spokes at the front discs and pads for deep grooves, thin pads or a raised lip on the disc edge. Front pads and discs on this car wear down faster than most, so check they haven't been left too long. !
- ☐ **Suspension.** Look at the shock absorbers for oily residue and bounce each corner, which should settle quickly with no extra bounce. A corner that keeps bouncing after you push down means a worn shock absorber. $

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. !
- ☐ **Seatbelts.** Pull each seatbelt out fully and let it retract, then click it into the buckle, checking for 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 couple of minutes and check it blows cold without a musty smell. A weak or warm flow can mean the system needs regassing. $
- ☐ **Boot.** Check the spare wheel and jack are present, then lift the boot liner to look underneath for water or rust. A damp smell under the liner often means a rear seal is leaking. $

5 Test drive

- ☐ **Automatic gearbox.** Automatic: drive through all gears and feel for slipping, shuddering or a thump when shifting into Drive or Reverse. 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 revs rise faster than road speed. A clutch that slips under load will need replacing soon, which is a big cost. $
- ☐ **Engine idle.** Let the engine idle at a stop and listen for a rough, uneven note or hesitation when you blip the throttle. A rough idle or flat spot can mean carbon build-up on the valves. $
- ☐ **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. !

! **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 continued

- [ ] **Engine mounts.** Sit at idle in Drive and feel for heavy shaking through the floor, 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 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. Missing stamps or a sudden jump in kilometres can mean skipped services or odometer tampering. $

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3+

recalls on Barinas built since 2005*

7

common faults reported on Barinas built since 2005*

3,049

owner complaints on Barinas (also sold as the Chevrolet Aveo and Sonic) built 2005–2018*

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