

Used Holden Commodore inspection checklist

What to check on a used VE or VF Commodore, what a problem looks like, and when to walk away.

COVERS

VE 2006–2013

VF 2013–2017



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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.

0 Before you go

- ☐ **Get the VIN and rego** before you travel. A seller who won't share them is a red flag on its own.
- ☐ **Know what you're looking at:** V6 or V8; petrol, LPG or dual-fuel; sedan, wagon or ute. LPG, V8 and ute checks below are marked.
- ☐ **Ask how it was used:** private, fleet, police, taxi or towing? For a V8, ask about track days, burnouts and tunes.
- ☐ **Ask for the engine to be cold,** go in daylight, and bring a torch, paper towel and a friend.

1 Exterior

- ☐ **Panels and paint.** Uneven gaps, mismatched colour or overspray on seals and trim mean crash repair. **\$**
- ☐ **Paint on the roof, bonnet and boot.** Faded or peeling clear coat is common on cars left in the sun. **\$**
- ☐ **Ex-fleet signs:** holes in the roof, dash or boot for lights, radios and meters; decal residue on the doors. **\$**
- ☐ **Ute: tub.** Dents and rust around the tailgate and tie-downs; the tonneau cover fits and seals. **\$**
- ☐ **Lights and glass.** All lights work, no condensation inside; windscreen free of chips in the driver's view. **\$**
- ☐ **Wheels.** Kerbed or cracked alloys; aftermarket wheels need to suit the car. A badly kerbed wheel can be bent. **\$**
- ☐ **VIN plate** (in a door frame or under the bonnet) is there, untouched, and matches the papers.

2 Under the bonnet

- ☐ **Engine oil** between the dipstick marks, brown not black. Old, dark oil means servicing has been skipped. **\$**

- ☐ **Coolant** at the mark and brightly coloured. Rusty or oily coolant, or regular top-ups, needs a mechanic. **\$**
- ☐ **Brake fluid** (small tank at the back of the engine bay) is clear to light amber, not dark. **\$**
- ☐ **Belts, hoses and battery.** No cracked belts or swollen hoses; clean battery terminals and a date sticker. **\$**
- ☐ **LPG: tank date.** The tank's compliance plate (in the boot or tub) shows when it was made or last tested. LPG tanks must be re-tested every 10 years to stay legal.
- ☐ **V8: modifications.** Aftermarket intake, headers, cam or tune. They must be declared to insurers and can make it unroadworthy.
- ☐ **Cold start.** Starts easily and settles to a smooth idle. A rattle for the first few seconds, or a steady tick, needs a mechanic. **\$**

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Tyres** above the wear bars, worn evenly and under ~6 years old. Worn-out rear tyres alone on a V8 can point to burnouts. **\$**
- ☐ **Rust and crash repairs.** Rust on the floor or around the suspension; bent metal, fresh welds or new black coating in one spot. **!**
- ☐ **Oil leaks** from the engine, gearbox and rear diff; drips where it's normally parked. **\$**
- ☐ **Suspension.** Oily shock absorbers, or cut or aftermarket springs. Lowered cars need to meet your state's ride-height rules. **\$**
- ☐ **Brakes.** Deep grooves, a raised edge or blue-tinged discs (overheated from hard driving). **\$**
- ☐ **Exhaust.** Aftermarket systems can be too loud to be legal; check for heavy rust or loose heat shields. **\$**
- ☐ **Towbar.** A worn tow ball means lots of towing; check the wiring plug works. **\$**

! 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.

4 Interior and electrics

- ☐ **Warning lights.** Key to "on": every dash light comes on, then goes out once running. An airbag, brake or engine light that stays on needs explaining. 
- ☐ **Water leaks.** Damp carpet, a wet boot floor or a stained headlining. 
- ☐ **Wear matches the kilometres.** Steering wheel, gear selector, pedals and driver's seat bolster. 
- ☐ **Seatbelts** pull out fully, retract and latch, with no fraying. 
- ☐ **Air con** blows cold within a minute or two, without a musty smell; heater gets hot. 
- ☐ **Electrics.** Screen, Bluetooth, reversing camera, sensors, windows and mirrors all work. Count the keys. 

5 Test drive

- ☐ **Automatic.** Smooth changes with no slipping, flare or thump into Drive or Reverse. 
- ☐ **Manual.** In 4th at 50 km/h, floor it: if revs rise faster than speed, the clutch is slipping. 
- ☐ **Engine.** Pulls smoothly with no stutter or smoke. LPG: runs smoothly on gas too, and switches over cleanly. 

- ☐ **Braking stability.** Brake firmly from 60 km/h: it stops straight, with no pulling, wobble or shimmy through the wheel. A wobble or shimmy under braking can mean worn front suspension parts. 
- ☐ **Steering and suspension.** Drives straight; no knocks or clunks over bumps. 
- ☐ **Noises.** A whine or clunk from the rear as you accelerate or lift off (rear diff); a hum that grows with speed (wheel bearing). 
- ☐ **Afterwards,** check for new drips, a steady temperature gauge and no hot smells. 

6 Documentation

- ☐ **Seller's ID** matches the rego papers, and the VIN matches on the papers and VIN plate. 
- ☐ **Service history.** Oil changes on time, with receipts. Ask about any timing-chain replacement on a V6. 
- ☐ **LPG paperwork.** Installation or tank re-test certificate, where your state requires one. 
- ☐ **Modifications in writing.** Tunes, lowering and exhausts, with engineering sign-off where your state requires it. 
- ☐ **Parts and servicing.** Holden stopped selling cars in 2020. Ask where it's been serviced, and check parts prices for any repair you'd need. 
- ☐ **Rego and roadworthy.** Rego checked online; roadworthy supplied if your state requires one on sale. 

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

15+

recalls on Commodores built since 2006*

18

common faults reported on Commodores built since 2006*

394

owner complaints on VE and VF Commodores (also sold as the Pontiac G8 and Chevrolet SS)*

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