

Used Holden Cruze inspection checklist

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



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COVERS **JG 2009–2011** **JH 2011–2016**

☐ **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:** petrol, turbo petrol or diesel; manual or auto. Turbo and diesel checks below are marked.
- ☐ **Ask how it was used:** private, ex-fleet, rideshare or a first car? Short trips or long country runs?
- ☐ **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. **\$**
- ☐ **Hail and dents.** Look along the roof and bonnet at a low angle to the light for small dimples. **\$**
- ☐ **Bumpers and wheels.** Parking scrapes, cracked bumper tabs and kerbed alloys. A badly kerbed wheel can be bent. **\$**
- ☐ **Lights and glass.** All lights work, no condensation inside; windscreen free of chips in the driver's view. **\$**
- ☐ **Ex-fleet signs:** holes in the dash for phone holders or meters; decal residue on the doors. **\$**
- ☐ **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. Oil in the coolant tank, or coolant in the oil, needs a mechanic. **\$**

- ☐ **Coolant** at the mark and a clean orange colour. A sweet smell, crusty residue or regular top-ups point to a leak. **\$**
- ☐ **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. **\$**
- ☐ **Leaks.** Wet oil on the engine, around the top cover or on turbo pipes is a leak. **\$**
- ☐ **Diesel: oil level** not above the top mark, and not smelling of diesel. A rising level usually comes from short trips interrupting the exhaust filter's self-clean. **\$**
- ☐ **Cold start.** Starts easily and settles to a smooth idle. A rattle, misfire or heavy smoke needs a mechanic. **\$**

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Tyre tread** above the wear bars, worn evenly. Wear on one edge only means the wheels are out of line. **\$**
- ☐ **Tyre age.** The 4-digit code on the side is the week and year made (2319 = week 23, 2019). Over ~6 years: budget for new ones. **\$**
- ☐ **Rust and crash repairs.** Rust on the floor or around the suspension; bent metal, fresh welds or new black coating in one spot. **!**
- ☐ **Drips** under the car, and oil or coolant stains where it's normally parked. **\$**
- ☐ **Suspension.** Push down on each corner: it should bounce back once and settle. Oily shock absorbers leak. **\$**
- ☐ **Brakes.** Deep grooves or a raised edge on the discs mean they're due. **\$**
- ☐ **Exhaust.** Heavy rust, holes or loose heat shields. Diesel: heavy soot can mean a damaged or removed exhaust filter (DPF). **\$**

! **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. Lift the boot floor. 
- ☐ **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, harsh shifts 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, misfire or smoke. Turbo or diesel: sudden power loss is a warning sign. 

- ☐ **Brakes.** Firm pedal; stops straight with no pulling, pulsing or grinding. 
- ☐ **Steering and suspension.** Drives straight; no knocks over bumps or clunks through the wheel. 
- ☐ **Noises at speed.** A hum that grows with speed is often a worn wheel bearing. 
- ☐ **Afterwards,** check for new drips, a steady temperature gauge and no sweet coolant smell. 

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. Cheap cars often miss services; ask for receipts, not just a stamped book. 
- ☐ **Repairs.** Ask about any engine, cooling or gearbox repairs, and get the paperwork. 
- ☐ **Timing belt.** Some Cruze engines use one. Ask when it was last replaced. 
- ☐ **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 Cruze you're looking at

8+

recalls on Cruzes built since 2009*

8

common faults reported on Cruzes built since 2009*

4,881

owner complaints on Cruzes (also sold as the Chevrolet Cruze) built 2011–2015*

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