

Used Honda Civic inspection checklist

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



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COVERS **8th gen 2006–2011** **9th gen 2012–2015** **10th gen 2016–2021** **11th gen 2021 on**

☐ **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 or hybrid; manual, auto or CVT. Their checks below are marked.
- ☐ **Ask how it was used:** private, ex-rental, rideshare or a first car? For a turbo or Type R, ask about track days 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 older 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, a scraped front lip on lowered cars, and kerbed alloys. A badly kerbed wheel can be bent. **\$**
- ☐ **Lights and glass.** All lights work; windscreen free of chips in the driver's view. Hazy, yellowed headlight lenses cut light output. **\$**
- ☐ **Doors and boot** open, shut and lock cleanly from the remote; mirrors fold. **\$**
- ☐ **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. **\$**
Turbo: a level above the top mark or a fuel smell can mean fuel getting into the oil.

- ☐ **Coolant** at the mark and a clean blue or green colour. **\$**
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. On a Type R, dark fluid can mean hard track use. **\$**
- ☐ **Belts, hoses and battery.** No cracked belts or swollen hoses. A weak 12V battery can stop a hybrid reaching "READY". **\$**
- ☐ **Modifications.** Aftermarket air intakes, a loud "whoosh" valve or an extra box wired into the engine mean it's been tuned. Tunes must be declared to insurers.
- ☐ **Leaks.** Wet oil on the engine is a leak. A freshly degreased engine on an older car can be hiding one. **\$**
- ☐ **Cold start.** Starts easily and idles smoothly, no rattle or smoke. Hybrid: "READY" shows; the engine may start and stop by itself. **\$**

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Tyre tread** above the wear bars, worn evenly. Heavy inside-edge wear is common on lowered cars and 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.** Bent metal, fresh welds or new black coating in one spot; damage to the floor from speed humps. **!**
- ☐ **Drips** under the car, and oil stains 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.** Heavy rust, holes or loose heat shields. Aftermarket systems can be too loud to be legal. **\$**

! 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, engine or hybrid warning that stays on needs explaining.

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- ☐ **Wear matches the kilometres.** Steering wheel, gear knob, pedals and driver's seat bolster.

\$
- ☐ **Seatbelts** pull out fully, retract and latch, with no fraying.

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- ☐ **Air con** blows cold within a minute or two, without a musty smell; heater gets hot.

\$
- ☐ **Electrics.** Screen, Bluetooth/CarPlay, reversing camera, windows and mirrors. Count the keys.

\$
- ☐ **Boot.** Spare wheel or repair kit and jack present. Lift the floor for water.

\$

5 Test drive

- ☐ **CVT automatic.** Smooth, steady pull with no judder, surging, slipping or loud whine. Ask when its fluid was changed.

\$
- ☐ **Regular auto.** 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. Gears go in without crunching.

\$

- ☐ **Hybrid.** Moves off smoothly, and the engine joins in with no surges, cut-outs or warnings.

\$
- ☐ **Brakes.** Firm pedal; stops straight with no pulling, pulsing or grinding.

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- ☐ **Steering and suspension.** Tracks straight; no knocks over bumps. A hum that grows with speed is often a wheel bearing.

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- ☐ **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.** Logbook stamped on time, with receipts. Ask when the gearbox fluid was last changed, if ever.

\$
- ☐ **Modifications in writing.** Tunes, lowering and exhausts, with engineering sign-off where your state requires it.
- ☐ **Fleet or rideshare records.** Ex-fleet cars are often well maintained; ask for the log.

\$
- ☐ **Warranty.** A newer Civic may still be under Honda's new-car warranty. Check the start date and that servicing kept it valid.
- ☐ **Rego and roadworthy.** Rego checked online; roadworthy supplied if your state requires one on sale.

\$

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

9+

recalls on Civics built since 2006*

28

common faults reported on Civics built since 2006*

13,905

owner complaints on Civics built since 2006*

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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Spots issues from your photos and audio

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* Shufti analysis, October 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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