

Used Honda CR-V inspection checklist

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



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COVERS **RE 2007–2012** **RM 2012–2017** **RW 2017–2023** **RS 2023 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 petrol, diesel or hybrid; 2WD or AWD; manual, auto or CVT. Their checks below are marked.
- ☐ **Ask how it was used:** private, ex-rental or fleet; short trips, towing 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. **\$**
- ☐ **Hail and dents.** Look along the roof, bonnet and tailgate at a low angle to the light. **\$**
- ☐ **Bumpers and wheels.** Parking scrapes and kerbed alloys. A badly kerbed wheel can be bent, causing vibration. **\$**
- ☐ **Paint on the roof and bonnet.** Faded or peeling clear coat is common on older cars left in the sun. **\$**
- ☐ **Lights and glass.** All lights work, no condensation inside; windscreen free of chips in the driver's view. **\$**
- ☐ **Doors and tailgate** open, shut and lock cleanly; a power tailgate (if fitted) runs smoothly. **\$**
- ☐ **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 or diesel: a level above the top mark or a fuel smell can mean fuel getting into the oil.

- ☐ **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. A weak 12V battery can stop a hybrid reaching "READY". **\$**
- ☐ **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

- ☐ **Tyres** above the wear bars, worn evenly and under ~6 years old. AWD models need four matching tyres; mismatched ones strain the AWD system. **\$**
- ☐ **AWD:** no oil leaking from the rear axle or drive parts underneath. **\$**
- ☐ **Rust and crash repairs.** Rust on the floor or around the suspension; bent metal, fresh welds or new black coating in one spot. **!**
- ☐ **Scrapes and drips.** Dents underneath from dirt roads; drips 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, engine or AWD warning that stays on needs explaining.

!
- ☐ **Third-row seats** (if fitted) fold and lock; belts work.

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

!
- ☐ **Wear matches the kilometres.** Steering wheel, pedals, driver's seat and cargo area.

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

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

\$

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 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.

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

\$

- ☐ **AWD.** In a car park, drive slowly on full lock both ways: no clunking, juddering or groaning from the rear.

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

!
- ☐ **Steering and noises.** Drives straight; no knocks over bumps. A hum that grows with speed is often a 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.** Logbook stamped on time, with receipts. Ask when the gearbox and rear diff fluids were last changed, if ever.

\$
- ☐ **Fleet or rental records.** Ex-fleet cars are often well maintained; ask for the log.

\$
- ☐ **Warranty.** A newer CR-V 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 CR-V you're looking at

8+

recalls on CR-Vs built since 2007*

24

common faults reported on CR-Vs built since 2007*

17,998

owner complaints on CR-Vs built since 2007*

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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* 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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