Used Jeep Wrangler inspection checklist

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

COVERS **JK** 2007–2018 **JL** 2018 on

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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

- ☐ **Soft top.** If fitted, check the soft top for tears, cracked rear window plastic and a snug fit against the frame. A loose or torn top lets water and wind noise into the cabin. $
- ☐ **Hardtop panels.** If fitted, check the removable hardtop panels seal evenly with no gaps and the latches lock firmly. A panel that doesn't latch properly can lift at speed and lets water in. !
- ☐ **Door hinges.** Open and close each door, including removing one if the seller allows, checking hinges aren't sloppy and doors shut without dropping. Worn hinges show as a door that sags before it latches. $
- ☐ **Bullbar mounting.** Check any fitted bullbar is bolted solidly to the chassis with no rust or cracking at the mounts, and doesn't block sensors. A loose bullbar can affect crash protection and sensor function. !

2 Under the bonnet

- ☐ **Oil consumption.** Ask how often oil needs topping up between services and check the dipstick reads within range. Oil use well above a litre per few thousand kilometres points to a bore or ring problem. $
- ☐ **Coolant level.** Check the coolant reservoir sits at the mark with no oily sheen, and ask if the car has ever needed unexpected top-ups. Steadily dropping coolant with no visible leak outside suggests an internal leak. $
- ☐ **Diesel intercooler.** Diesel: look at the intercooler and its hoses at the front of the engine bay for cracks, oil residue or clamps that have been retightened. A clogged or leaking intercooler causes a loss of power under load. $
- ☐ **Cold start noise.** Start the engine from cold and listen for a persistent tick or light knock from the top of the engine. A tick that doesn't fade as the engine warms points to valve train wear. $

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Chassis rails.** Crouch down and check the chassis rails for kinks, cracks or fresh welds, especially near the axles and any towbar. A kink or weld usually means a hard off-road impact or heavy towing. !
- ☐ **Underbody guards.** Check for skid plates or rock sliders and look for dents, scrapes or missing bolts underneath. Heavy scraping suggests hard off-road use that may have stressed other parts. $
- ☐ **Diesel turbo hoses.** Diesel: look inside the large rubber intake hoses for oily residue and check hose clamps for cracking or tears. Oily residue or a torn hose points to a failing turbo or boost leak. $
- ☐ **Tyre wear.** Check all tyres, including the spare, for even wear and a sidewall date code under about six years old. Uneven wear across one tyre can point to alignment issues from off-road use. $

4 Interior and electrics

- ☐ **Water leaks.** Check the carpet, seat bases and door seals for damp patches or watermarks, particularly around the removable top and doors. Damp carpet after rain is worth asking about. $
- ☐ **Warning lights.** Turn the key to "on" and check the engine, ABS and airbag lights all come on then go out once the engine is running. A light that stays on needs an explanation before you buy. !
- ☐ **Infotainment.** Test the touchscreen and its response to taps and menu changes. A glitchy or freezing screen points to an electrical fault that can be hard to pin down. $
- ☐ **Seatbelts.** Pull each seatbelt out fully and let it retract, checking it latches firmly with no fraying in the webbing. A belt that doesn't retract smoothly or is frayed is a safety risk in a crash. !

5 Test drive

- ☐ **Steering shake.** At highway speed, including over a bump, feel for a sudden violent shake through the steering wheel that settles again. A shake like this is a serious front-end fault needing urgent repair. !
- ☐ **Automatic gearbox.** Automatic: drive off from a stop and check it moves away promptly without a pause or delay before engaging. A noticeable delay before the car takes up drive points to a transmission fault. $
- ☐ **Manual clutch.** Manual: check the clutch bites smoothly partway up the pedal travel, with no slipping under load or grinding into gear. A clutch that bites right at the top of its travel is near the end of its life. $

! **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

- [ ] **4WD engagement.** On gravel or grass, shift into 4WD and low range, checking for clunks and that the dash light confirms engagement. A clunk or a light that won't confirm engagement points to a transfer case fault. $
- [ ] **Braking.** Brake firmly from speed on a quiet road and feel for the car pulling to one side or shaking through the pedal. Pulling or shaking points to uneven brakes needing attention before you rely on it. !

6 Documentation

- [ ] **Modification paperwork.** Ask for certificates for any suspension lift, bigger tyres or GVM upgrade, and check these were declared to your state and insurer.
- [ ] **Service history.** Check the logbook or invoices show regular oil changes and any diesel filter servicing done on time. Gaps in servicing are a strong bargaining point. Skipped services often line up with the problems found elsewhere on the car. $
- [ ] **Registration.** Check the car's registration status online through your state's rego check to confirm it's current and not written off.

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

7+
recalls on Wranglers built since 2007*

13
common faults reported on Wranglers built since 2007*

20,474
owner complaints on Wranglers 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, November 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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