

Used Kia Rio inspection checklist

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

COVERS

UB 2011–2017

YB 2017–2023



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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:** petrol or diesel; manual, regular auto or dual-clutch. Diesel and dual-clutch checks below are marked.
- ☐ **Ask how it was used:** first car, ex-rental, delivery driving or city only?
- ☐ **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. **\$**
- ☐ **Learner-driver knocks.** Scraped bumper corners, dented doors and scuffed mirrors. Small dents add up; check behind them for bent metal. **\$**
- ☐ **Hail and dents.** Look along the roof and bonnet at a low angle to the light for small dimples. **\$**
- ☐ **Wheels.** Kerbed alloys or cracked wheel covers. A badly kerbed wheel can be bent, causing vibration. **\$**
- ☐ **Lights and glass.** All lights work; windscreen free of chips in the driver's view. Hazy, yellowed headlight lenses cut light output. **\$**
- ☐ **Rust** on older cars: wheel arches, sills and the bottom of the tailgate. **\$**
- ☐ **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. Ask how often it's topped up between services. **\$**

- ☐ **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. **\$**
- ☐ **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. **\$**
- ☐ **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 settles to a smooth idle. Knocking that speeds up with the revs needs a mechanic before you buy. **\$**

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Tyre tread** above the wear bars, worn evenly. Wear on one edge only means the wheels are out of line, often from hitting kerbs. **\$**
- ☐ **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 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 knob, 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/CarPlay, reversing camera, windows and mirrors. Count the keys. \$

5 Test drive

- ☐ **Manual.** In 4th at 50 km/h, floor it: if revs rise faster than speed, the clutch is slipping. Gears go in without crunching. \$
- ☐ **Regular auto.** Smooth changes with no slipping, flare or thump into Drive or Reverse. \$
- ☐ **Dual-clutch auto (DCT).** Smooth take-off with no judder or hesitation, including crawling in traffic and reversing up a slope. Judder or hesitation at low speed is a warning sign. \$

- ☐ **Engine.** Pulls cleanly with no stutter, hesitation or smoke. Diesel: ask how often the exhaust filter light has come on. \$
- ☐ **Brakes.** Firm pedal; stops straight with no pulling, pulsing or grinding. !
- ☐ **Steering and suspension.** 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. Cheap cars often miss services; ask for receipts, not just a stamped book. \$
- ☐ **Engine work.** Ask whether the engine has ever been replaced or repaired under warranty, and get the paperwork. \$
- ☐ **Rental or delivery records.** Ask directly whether it was a hire or delivery car, and ask for the log. \$
- ☐ **Warranty.** A newer Rio may still be under Kia'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 Rio you're looking at

2+

recalls on Rios built since 2011*

15

common faults reported on Rios built since 2011*

741

owner complaints on Rios built 2012–2023*

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