

Used Kia Sportage inspection checklist

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



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COVERS **SL 2010–2015** **QL 2016–2021** **NQ5 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, diesel or hybrid; 2WD or AWD; and the gearbox. Diesel, hybrid, AWD and dual-clutch 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. **\$**
- ☐ **Rust** on older cars: wheel arches, sills and the bottom of the tailgate. **\$**
- ☐ **Lights, glass and sensors.** All lights work, no condensation inside; windscreen free of chips; front sensors and camera undamaged. **\$**
- ☐ **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. Ask how often it's topped up; some petrol engines use oil 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. A weak 12V battery can stop a hybrid starting. **\$**
- ☐ **Leaks.** Wet oil on the engine or turbo pipes is a leak. **\$**
- ☐ **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

- ☐ **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. **\$**
- ☐ **Diesel: exhaust.** Heavy black soot at the tailpipe 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 hybrid warning that stays on needs explaining. 
- ☐ **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/CarPlay, reversing camera, sensors, windows and sunroof. Count the keys. 
- ☐ **Cargo area.** Spare wheel and jack present; lift the floor for water; rear seats fold and lock. 

5 Test drive

- ☐ **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. 
- ☐ **Regular auto.** Smooth changes with no slipping or thump into Drive or Reverse. 
- ☐ **Hybrid.** Moves off smoothly on electric power, and the engine joins in with no surges, cut-outs or warnings. 

- ☐ **Engine.** Pulls smoothly with no stutter, hesitation or smoke. Diesel: ask how often the exhaust filter light has come on. 
- ☐ **Steering.** Tracks straight. A clunk felt through the wheel on rough roads can be a worn steering part. 
- ☐ **Brakes.** Firm pedal; stops straight with no pulling, pulsing or grinding. 
- ☐ **Noises.** Knocks over bumps (worn suspension parts); a hum that grows with speed (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. Turbo engines and dual-clutch gearboxes don't forgive skipped services. 
- ☐ **Engine work.** Ask whether the engine has ever been replaced or repaired under warranty, and get the paperwork. 
- ☐ **Warranty.** Kia's new-car warranty is long, so many used Sportages are still covered. 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 Sportage you're looking at

11+

recalls on Sportages built since 2010*

19

common faults reported on Sportages built since 2010*

3,640

owner complaints on Sportages built since 2011*

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