

Used Mazda CX-5 inspection checklist

What to check on a used CX-5, petrol or diesel, what a problem looks like, and when to walk away.



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KE 2012–2017

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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.
- ☐ **Petrol or diesel? 2WD or AWD?** Diesel and AWD checks below are marked.
- ☐ **Ask how it was driven:** mostly short trips, towing, or long country runs? Diesels that only do short trips are the ones most likely to have trouble.
- ☐ **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; windscreen free of chips; the camera area behind the mirror isn't damaged. Windscreens with a camera cost more to replace. **\$**
- ☐ **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

- ☐ **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. **\$**

- ☐ **Petrol: engine oil** between the dipstick marks, brown not black. **\$**
- ☐ **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. **\$**
- ☐ **Battery.** Look for a date sticker. Stop-start (i-stop) cars need a special battery; if i-stop never switches the engine off, it may be weak. **\$**
- ☐ **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, with no rattle, knock or smoke. **\$**

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 exhaust filter light that stays on needs explaining.

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- ☐ **Touchscreen** responds properly and doesn't press itself.

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

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- ☐ **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.

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- ☐ **Electrics.** 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

- ☐ **Automatic.** Pulls away smoothly with no jerk, shudder or hesitation; changes are quick and quiet.

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- ☐ **Manual.** In 4th at 50 km/h, floor it: if revs rise faster than speed, the clutch is slipping.

\$
- ☐ **Diesel: power.** Pulls strongly with no flat spots or sudden power loss. Ask how often the exhaust filter light has come on.

\$

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

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- ☐ **Steering and suspension.** Drives straight; no knocks over bumps or clunks through the wheel.

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- ☐ **Noises at speed.** A hum that grows with speed is often a worn 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. Diesels need regular oil changes; ask about any exhaust filter or injector work.

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

\$
- ☐ **Warranty.** A newer CX-5 may still be under Mazda'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 CX-5 you're looking at

5+

recalls on CX-5s built since 2012*

29

common faults reported on CX-5s built since 2012*

3,238

owner complaints on CX-5s built since 2013*

Money owing, stolen or a write-off?

A tidy car can hide all three.

What's each fault worth?

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