Used Mazda CX-9 inspection checklist

What to check on a used CX-9, what a problem looks like, and when to walk away.

COVERS **TB** 2007–2016 **TC** 2016–2023

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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.

1 Exterior

- ☐ **Panel gaps.** Walk around the body in daylight and check panel gaps are even and paint colour matches between panels. Overspray on rubber seals points to past crash repair. A slightly different shade on one door or guard usually means a respray after damage. $
- ☐ **Rust.** Check the wheel arches, sills and the bottom edge of the tailgate for bubbling paint or rust spots, especially on an older car. Rust starting here often means the car has sat outside near the coast for years. $
- ☐ **Lights.** Turn on every light and indicator and check they all work properly, including reverse and fog lights if fitted. A light that stays dim or flickers can mean a failing globe or wiring fault. $
- ☐ **Tailgate operation.** Open and close the tailgate, by hand and by the power button if fitted, and make sure it moves smoothly with no grinding noise. A power tailgate that struggles or stalls partway usually means a tired motor or strut. $

2 Under the bonnet

- ☐ **Engine oil.** Pull the dipstick and check the oil sits between the marks and looks brown, not black or gritty. Black, gritty oil suggests the car has had long gaps between services. $
- ☐ **Coolant.** Check the coolant sits at the mark and is a clean colour, and look for crusty white residue or wet drips around hoses and the water pump area at the front of the engine. Crusty residue or oily-looking coolant near the pump can mean coolant is leaking into the engine oil. $
- ☐ **Turbo sound.** On the test drive, accelerate firmly and listen for a whistling or whining sound from the engine bay. A loud whistle under load can mean a failing turbo seal or boost leak. $
- ☐ **Stop-start battery.** Look for a battery date sticker and check that the stop-start system actually switches the engine off at a standstill when warmed up. If stop-start never kicks in, the special battery it needs may be weak. $
- ☐ **Cold start.** If possible, be there for the first start of the day and listen for it settling quickly to a smooth, even idle. A knock or rattle on a cold start that fades after a few seconds can point to engine wear. $

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Tyres.** Check all four tyres are above the wear bars, worn evenly and roughly matched in brand and tread depth. On an AWD car, mismatched tyre sizes or wear can strain the drive system over time. $
- ☐ **AWD transfer case.** During the test drive do several full-lock, low-speed turns on a car park surface listening for a clunk or whine from underneath. A whine or clunk on tight turns can mean the transfer case or rear drive unit is wearing out, a costly repair. $
- ☐ **Floor rust.** Look along the floor pan and around the suspension mounts for rust, bent metal, fresh welds or a patch of new black coating. A single patch of new coating or weld in one spot usually means a repaired impact, not factory finish. !
- ☐ **Brake discs.** Look through the wheel spokes at the brake discs for deep grooves or a raised lip on the outer edge. A raised lip means the discs are worn thin and due for replacement soon. $
- ☐ **Towbar.** If a towbar is fitted, check it and its wiring plug for rust and make sure the mounting bolts are tight and secure. Ask how much weight has been towed, as heavy towing adds extra strain to the drivetrain. $

4 Interior and electrics

- ☐ **Warning lights.** Turn the key or press start to "on" and check every dash warning light comes on then goes out once the engine is running. An airbag, brake or engine light that stays lit needs a proper explanation before buying. !
- ☐ **Seatbelts.** Pull each seatbelt in all three rows fully out, let it retract, and check the buckle latches properly with no fraying on the webbing. A belt that won't retract smoothly or feels frayed needs replacing before the car is safe to use. !
- ☐ **Third row seats.** Fold the third row flat and then back up again, checking it moves easily and the seat base and trim aren't excessively worn. Heavy wear here often means the third row doubled as a load area rather than for passengers. $
- ☐ **Infotainment screen.** Check the touchscreen responds without freezing or rebooting, and look closely at the glass for cracks or scratches near the edges. A cracked edge or a screen that reboots on its own will need replacing. $

! **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

- [ ] **Automatic gearbox.** Drive from a stop and through all gears, feeling for any jerk, shudder or hesitation, and listening for quiet, quick changes. Shuddering or hesitation when pulling away can mean a worn automatic transmission. $
- [ ] **Brake pedal feel.** Brake firmly from a reasonable speed and check the pedal feels firm, the car stops straight, and there's no pulling, pulsing or grinding. A spongy or sinking pedal that needs extra pressure to stop can mean a failing brake part. !
- [ ] **Noises at speed.** Drive at a steady highway speed on a quiet road and listen for a humming noise that grows louder the faster you go. A rising hum with speed is often a worn wheel bearing. $

6 Documentation

- [ ] **Service history.** Check the logbook is stamped on schedule and matched by receipts, and ask if the gearbox and differential got extra servicing if the car was used for towing. Gaps in the service book often line up with cheap, deferred maintenance. $
- [ ] **Registration check.** Check the registration status online using your state's registration check service to confirm it's current, matches the seller's name and the car isn't unregistered or suspended.

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3+
recalls on CX-9s built since 2007*

16
common faults reported on CX-9s built since 2007*

1,818
owner complaints on CX-9s built since 2007*

Money owing, stolen or a write-off?
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What's each fault worth?
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