

Used Mazda3 inspection checklist

What to check on a used Mazda3, what a problem looks like, and when to walk away.



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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. Don't buy until a qualified mechanic has checked it.

\$ 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.
- ☐ **Ask how it was used:** private, ex-rental or fleet, and how many owners.
- ☐ **Ask for the engine to be cold** when you arrive. Rattles, rough idle and smoke show best on a cold start.
- ☐ **Go in daylight, in dry weather**, and bring a torch, paper towel and a friend.

1 Exterior

- ☐ **Rust** in the rear wheel arches, sills and door bottoms. **\$**
Rear-arch rust is a commonly reported problem on older Mazda3s.
- ☐ **Stone chips.** Chips along the bonnet's leading edge and front bumper. Chipped paint left untreated starts to rust. **\$**
- ☐ **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 boot at a low angle to the light. **\$**
- ☐ **Lights and glass.** All lights work; windscreen free of chips in the driver's view. Older cars often have hazy, yellowed headlight lenses. **\$**
- ☐ **Doors and boot** all lock and unlock from the remote. **\$**
Failing door locks are reported on older Mazda3s.
- ☐ **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. **\$**
On a diesel Mazda3, oil above the top mark can mean fuel dilution.

- ☐ **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.** Clean terminals and a date sticker. Cars with i-stop (engine off at the lights) need a specific, pricier battery; if i-stop never works, the battery may be tired. **\$**
- ☐ **Rubber belts and hoses.** No cracks or fraying; hoses feel firm, not swollen. **\$**
- ☐ **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 idles smoothly. A rattle in the first few seconds, blue smoke or white smoke that won't clear needs a mechanic. **\$**

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Tyre tread** deeper than the small bars in the grooves, worn evenly. Wear on one edge only means the wheels are out of line. **\$**
- ☐ **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. **\$**
- ☐ **Wheels.** Kerbed or cracked alloys. A badly kerbed wheel can be bent, causing vibration. **\$**
- ☐ **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 and brakes.** Oily shock absorbers; deep grooves or a raised edge on the brake discs. **\$**
- ☐ **Exhaust.** Heavy rust, holes or loose heat shields that rattle. **\$**

! 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.

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- ☐ **Infotainment screen** responds without freezing or "ghost touches" (selecting things by itself). Both are commonly reported on Mazda's touchscreen systems.

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- ☐ **Controls.** The rotary control knob, Bluetooth/CarPlay, reversing camera, windows and mirrors all work.

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- ☐ **Wear matches the kilometres.** Steering wheel, gear knob, 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. Count the keys and test the remotes.

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- ☐ **Boot.** Spare wheel or repair kit and jack present. Lift the floor for water or rust.

\$

5 Test drive

- ☐ **Automatic.** Smooth changes with no slipping, delay or thump into Drive or Reverse. Ask when the transmission fluid was last changed.

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

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- ☐ **Engine mounts.** Heavy shaking at idle in Drive, or a clunk when you pull away or shift into Reverse, can mean worn mounts.

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- ☐ **Steering.** Tracks straight and feels consistent. Heavy steering or a whine on older Mazda3s can point to a failing power-steering pump.

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

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- ☐ **Noises.** Knocks over bumps (worn suspension parts); a hum that grows with speed (wheel bearing). Some tyre roar on coarse roads is normal for a Mazda3.

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- ☐ **Driver assists.** Low-speed auto-braking and other aids (if fitted) work without sensor warnings.

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- ☐ **Afterwards,** check for new drips, a steady temperature gauge and no hot smells.

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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; odometer readings climb steadily.

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

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- ☐ **Warranty.** A newer Mazda3 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.

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Guided, model-specific checks Built from that make, model and year's known faults, with help a tap away.	✓	✓	×
PPSR and government recall checks Rules out finance owing, write-offs and open recalls before you buy.	✓	×	×
Crosschecks over 3 million recalls and owner complaints Flags known issues for that model before you even see the car.	✓	×	×
Smart detection of issues from your photos and audio Snap a photo or record a noise and Shufti flags what might be wrong.	✓	×	×
Test drive route planning and navigation A route designed to surface issues a car park lap won't, with turn-by-turn directions.	✓	×	×
Instant report generation A shareable summary of every finding, ready the moment you finish.	✓	×	×
Negotiation copilot and repair cost estimates Estimates what each finding will cost to fix and what to say to the seller.	✓	×	×
Plain-English explanations, not jargon	✓	✓	✓
No booking or waiting required	✓	×	✓

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