Used Mercedes-Benz A-Class inspection checklist

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

COVERS **W176** 2013–2018 **W177** 2018 on

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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 fit.** Sight down each panel gap and check paint colour matches across adjoining panels and inside the door jambs. Uneven gaps or overspray on seals point to earlier crash repair. $
- ☐ **Alloy wheels.** Check all four alloy wheels for kerb scrapes, cracks or signs of repair paint on the rim edge. A cracked rim is a safety risk and can be costly to replace. Low-profile tyres on this car make kerbing more common. $
- ☐ **Headlights.** Turn on every light and check each one is bright and clear with no condensation inside the lens. If fitted with LED or Matrix lights, check for dead segments. A cloudy patch inside the lens points to a failed seal. $
- ☐ **Rust.** Check the sills, wheel arches and door bottoms for bubbling paint or rust. Any rust here points to a car that's spent time near the coast or stored wet. Rust starting at door bottoms usually spreads from trapped moisture inside. $

2 Under the bonnet

- ☐ **Engine oil.** Pull the dipstick or check the digital readout and confirm the oil level is correct and the oil looks brown, not black or gritty. Ask how often oil is topped up between services. $
- ☐ **Coolant level.** Check the coolant reservoir is filled to its mark and the coolant is a clean colour, not rusty or oily. Look around the thermostat housing and hoses for dried coolant residue. Crusty white or pink residue near hose joints points to a slow leak. $
- ☐ **Engine idle smoothness.** Start the engine from cold and let it idle for a minute, listening for a rough, uneven note or the engine light coming on. A shaking idle or flashing light can mean a misfiring cylinder. A misfire often shows as a slight shudder felt through the car at idle. $
- ☐ **Battery.** Look for clean terminals and check the car restarts quickly after being switched off for a minute. If fitted with stop-start, confirm it re-engages the engine smoothly. A battery older than about four years may need replacing soon. $

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Underbody rust.** Look under the car at the floor and around the suspension mounts for rust, bent metal or fresh welds. A patch of new black coating in one spot can be hiding repair work. Fresh undercoating in just one spot is often used to disguise crash repairs. !
- ☐ **Tyre tread.** Check tread depth is above the wear bars on all four tyres and wear is even across each one. Uneven wear across the width can point to worn suspension parts. Wear on one edge only usually means the wheels are out of alignment. $
- ☐ **Brake discs.** Look at the visible edge of each brake disc through the wheel for deep grooves or a raised lip. A heavily grooved disc means it's due for replacement. A raised outer lip means the disc is worn thinner than it should be. !
- ☐ **Exhaust filter.** Diesel: check for a dashboard warning about the particulate filter and look for soot staining around the exhaust tip. A filter that needs forced regeneration can be an expensive fix. Heavy soot staining points to frequent short trips that clog the filter. $

4 Interior and electrics

- ☐ **Warning lights.** Turn the car on and check every dash light comes on then goes out once the engine is running. An airbag, brake, engine or emissions light that stays lit needs an explanation. A light taped over or a bulb removed is a red flag. !
- ☐ **Seatbelts.** Pull each seatbelt out fully and let it retract, then click it into the buckle. It should move smoothly with no fraying or stiffness. A belt that doesn't retract properly may not hold you firmly in a crash. !
- ☐ **Interior rattles.** Drive over a rough section of road with the stereo off and listen for rattles or squeaks from the dash, doors or centre console. Press on trim panels to check for looseness. Loose trim clips are cheap but can point to a hastily refitted interior after repair. $
- ☐ **Infotainment screen.** Test the main touchscreen and any touchpad controller for lag, dead zones or a frozen display. Check Bluetooth and reversing camera if fitted work correctly. A slow or glitchy screen can point to a software fault that needs a dealer reset. $

! **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

- [ ] **Dual-clutch gearbox.** Automatic: pull away gently from a stop, including uphill or in traffic, and feel for judder or hesitation in the first few metres. Shifts higher up should feel smooth and quick. Judder at low speed is a warning sign of a worn clutch pack. $
- [ ] **Timing chain noise.** Start the engine from cold before it's been run that day and listen for a rattle lasting more than a second or two. A persistent rattle at idle or on startup points to chain wear. A rattle that fades quickly is less concerning than one that lingers. $
- [ ] **Brakes.** Brake firmly from speed on an empty road; the car should stop straight with no pulling, pulsing or grinding. A grinding noise means the pads have worn down to metal. !
- [ ] **Steering.** Check the car tracks straight with no wandering, and the steering weight feels consistent at all speeds. A clunk felt through the wheel over bumps points to a worn steering part. $

6 Documentation

- [ ] **Seller's ID.** Check the seller's ID matches the name on the rego papers, and that the VIN matches across the papers and the VIN plate on the car. Any mismatch needs an explanation before you pay anything.
- [ ] **Service history.** Look through the logbook for stamps on time with matching receipts, and check odometer readings climb steadily with no gaps. Missing stamps or a sudden jump in kilometres can mean skipped services. $
- [ ] **Roadworthy certificate.** Check the registration status online and confirm a current roadworthy certificate is supplied if your state requires one for a private sale. A missing certificate can mean extra cost before you can drive it home. $

What this guide can't tell you about the A-Class you're looking at

12+

recalls on A-Classes built since 2013*

9

common faults reported on A-Classes built since 2013*

Money owing, stolen or a write-off?

A tidy car can hide all three.

What's each fault worth?

Shufti's negotiation coach turns it into leverage.

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- PPSR and government recall checks included
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* Shufti analysis, November 2026, of official recall notices, complaints lodged by vehicle owners with vehicle safety regulators, and independent reviews and owner forums. Faults are counted when two or more independent sources report them.

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