Used MG ZS inspection checklist

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

COVERS **First generation** 2017–2020 **Second generation** 2021 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

- ☐ **Panels.** Walk around the car in daylight and check panel gaps are even and paint colour matches everywhere, including inside the boot lid and door jambs. Overspray on rubber seals or mismatched colour between panels points to earlier crash repair. $
- ☐ **Lights.** Turn on every light and indicator, including reverse and fog lights, and check each lens for cracks or condensation inside. Foggy condensation inside a headlight means a failed seal and a likely repair. $

2 Under the bonnet

- ☐ **Engine oil.** Pull the dipstick and check the oil sits between the marks and looks brown, not black or gritty. A strong fuel smell on the dipstick can mean the engine isn't burning fuel properly. $
- ☐ **Coolant.** Check the coolant reservoir is at the correct mark and the coolant is brightly coloured, not rusty or oily. Signs of frequent top-ups suggest a leak that needs chasing down before buying. $
- ☐ **Belts.** Look at the drive belt for cracking, fraying or glazing on its surface. A perished belt can snap without warning and leave you stranded. $
- ☐ **Cold start.** Ask the seller not to start the car before you arrive, then start it cold and listen as it settles to idle. A knock, rattle or puff of smoke on a cold start points to engine wear. $

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Tyre wear.** Check all four tyres for tread depth above the wear bars, even wear, and a manufacture date under about six years old. Heavier wear on the front edges can point to worn suspension or poor alignment. $
- ☐ **Rust.** Crouch down and look at the floor pans and around the suspension mounting points for rust, bent metal or fresh underseal in one patch. Fresh black coating in a single spot often hides repaired crash damage. !
- ☐ **Suspension bounce.** Push down hard on each corner of the car and let go; it should rise once and settle without continuing to bounce. A knocking or clunking noise over small bumps often means worn suspension bushes or links. $
- ☐ **Brake discs.** Look through each wheel's spokes at the brake discs for deep grooves or a lip around the outer edge. A raised lip means the discs are thin and due for replacement soon. $
- ☐ **Exhaust.** Check the exhaust pipe and muffler for heavy rust, holes or loosely hanging heat shields. A rattling heat shield is cheap to fix but can sound like a bigger problem. $

4 Interior and electrics

- ☐ **Warning lights.** Turn the key to "on" without starting the engine and check every dashboard warning light lights up, then goes out once the engine is running. An airbag, ABS or engine light that stays lit needs a clear explanation before buying. !
- ☐ **Seatbelts.** Pull each seatbelt out fully and let it retract, checking it latches firmly and the webbing isn't frayed or cut. A belt that doesn't retract smoothly may not hold you properly in a crash. !
- ☐ **Infotainment screen.** Use the touchscreen to browse menus, connect your phone and switch to the reversing camera, checking everything responds without freezing. A screen that freezes or restarts itself during normal use points to a software fault. $
- ☐ **Air conditioning.** Run the air con for a few minutes and check it blows properly cold air without a musty smell. A weak or warm airflow can mean a low refrigerant charge or failing compressor. $

5 Test drive

- ☐ **Automatic transmission.** Automatic: drive from a stop and through several gear changes, checking the car pulls away smoothly with no hesitation, jerk or shudder. Hesitating before moving off or jerky changes at low speed point to a transmission problem. $
- ☐ **Manual gearbox.** Manual: check the clutch bites partway through the pedal travel, not right at the top or floor, and gears select without crunching. A clutch biting very high or very low can mean it's near the end of its life. $
- ☐ **Brake feel.** Brake firmly from speed on a quiet road and check the pedal feels solid and the car stops straight without pulling, grinding or pulsing. A pedal that feels soft, sinks slowly, or varies between stops can mean a brake fault that affects stopping power. !

! **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 continued

- [ ] **Steering feel.** Drive on a straight, flat road and check the car tracks straight without pulling to one side or needing constant correction. Pulling to one side can mean uneven tyre pressures, poor alignment or a suspension fault. $

6 Documentation

- [ ] **VIN match.** Check the VIN on the registration papers matches the VIN plate on the car, usually found in a door frame or under the bonnet.
- [ ] **Service history.** Check the logbook is stamped on schedule and matches any receipts or online service records. Gaps in the service history can affect any remaining warranty claims. $
- [ ] **Warranty status.** Check how much of the original factory warranty remains on the car and whether it transfers to a new owner. A car still under warranty can save you money on any early faults. $
- [ ] **Rego check.** Check the registration is current using your state's online rego check tool before agreeing to buy. An expired or soon-to-expire rego adds cost you'll need to budget for. $

What this guide can't tell you about the ZS you're looking at

1+

recalls on ZS SUVs built since 2017*

8

common faults reported on ZS SUVs built since 2017*

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.

A Shufti inspection covers all of that, plus:

- Guided checks for the exact car you're inspecting
- PPSR and government recall checks included
- Crosschecks 3M+ recalls and owner complaints
- Spots issues from your photos and audio
- Test drive routes with turn-by-turn navigation
- Negotiation coach with repair cost estimates

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* Shufti analysis, October 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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