

Used Mitsubishi Lancer inspection checklist

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



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COVERS

CJ sedan 2007–2017

CJ Sportback 2008–2017

☐ **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.
- ☐ **Know the gearbox:** manual, CVT automatic or, on the Ralliart, a dual-clutch auto. Each has its own test-drive check on page 2.
- ☐ **Ask how it was used:** private, ex-fleet, rideshare or a first car? For a Ralliart, ask about track days and tunes.
- ☐ **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.
- ☐ **Paint on the roof, bonnet and boot.** Faded or peeling clear coat is common on older cars left in the sun.
- ☐ **Hail and dents.** Look along the roof and bonnet at a low angle to the light for small dimples.
- ☐ **Bumpers and wheels.** Parking scrapes, cracked bumper tabs and kerbed alloys. A badly kerbed wheel can be bent.
- ☐ **Lights and glass.** All lights work; windscreen free of chips in the driver's view. Hazy, yellowed headlight lenses cut light output.
- ☐ **Rust** on older cars: wheel arches, sills and the bottom of the doors and boot lid.
- ☐ **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. Old, dark oil means servicing has been skipped.

- ☐ **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.
- ☐ **Belts, hoses and battery.** No cracked belts or swollen hoses; clean battery terminals and a date sticker.
- ☐ **Leaks.** Wet oil on the engine is a leak. A freshly degreased engine on an older car can be hiding one.
- ☐ **Ralliart: modifications.** Aftermarket intake, a loud "whoosh" valve or an extra box wired into the engine mean it's been tuned.
- ☐ **Cold start.** Starts easily and settles to a smooth idle. A rattle for the first few seconds, or smoke, needs a mechanic.

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Tyre tread** above the wear bars, 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.
- ☐ **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. Ralliart: no oil leaking from the rear axle.
- ☐ **Suspension.** Push down on each corner: it should bounce back once and settle. Oily shock absorbers leak.
- ☐ **Brakes.** Deep grooves, a raised edge or blue-tinged discs (overheated from hard driving).
- ☐ **Exhaust.** Heavy rust, holes or loose heat shields. Aftermarket systems can be too loud to be legal.

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 gearbox warning that stays on needs explaining. 
- ☐ **Water leaks.** Damp carpet, a wet boot floor or a stained headlining. Lift the boot floor. 
- ☐ **Wear matches the kilometres.** Steering wheel, gear knob, pedals and driver's seat bolster. 
- ☐ **Seatbelts** pull out fully, retract and latch, with no fraying. 
- ☐ **Air con** blows cold within a minute or two, without a musty smell; heater gets hot. 
- ☐ **Electrics.** Stereo or screen, Bluetooth, windows, mirrors and central locking. Count the keys. 

5 Test drive

- ☐ **CVT automatic.** Smooth, steady pull with no judder, surging, slipping or loud whine. Ask when its fluid was changed. 
- ☐ **Dual-clutch auto (Ralliart).** Smooth take-off with no judder, jerk or clunk, including crawling in traffic. Judder or hesitation at low speed is a warning sign. 
- ☐ **Manual.** In 4th at 50 km/h, floor it: if revs rise faster than speed, the clutch is slipping. Gears go in without crunching. 

- ☐ **Engine.** Pulls smoothly with no stutter, hesitation or smoke. Turbo: no loud whistle or sudden power loss. 
- ☐ **Brakes.** Firm pedal; stops straight with no pulling, pulsing or grinding. 
- ☐ **Steering and suspension.** Drives straight; no knocks over bumps. A hum that grows with speed is often a 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. Ask when the CVT or dual-clutch fluid was last changed, if ever. 
- ☐ **Gearbox repairs.** Ask whether the gearbox has been repaired or replaced, and get the paperwork. 
- ☐ **Modifications in writing.** Tunes, lowering and exhausts, with engineering sign-off where your state requires it.
- ☐ **Fleet or rideshare records.** Ex-fleet cars are often well maintained; ask for the log. 
- ☐ **Rego and roadworthy.** Rego checked online; roadworthy supplied if your state requires one on sale. 

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

8+

recalls on Lancers built since 2007*

12

common faults reported on Lancers built since 2007*

575

owner complaints on Lancers built since 2008*

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