

Used Nissan Pulsar inspection checklist

What to check on a used Pulsar, sedan or hatch, what a problem looks like, and when to walk away.



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COVERS

B17 sedan 2013–2017

C12 hatch 2013–2017

☐ **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 or CVT automatic. Each has its own test-drive check on page 2.
- ☐ **Ask how it was used:** private, ex-rental or fleet; city commuting or long country runs? For an SSS, ask about 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. **\$**
- ☐ **Parking knocks.** Scraped bumper corners, dented doors and scuffed mirrors. Check behind small dents for bent metal. **\$**
- ☐ **Paint and hail.** Faded or peeling paint on the roof and bonnet; small dimples seen at a low angle to the light. **\$**
- ☐ **Ex-fleet signs:** holes in the dash or boot for radios and trackers; decal residue on the doors. **\$**
- ☐ **Wheels.** Kerbed alloys or cracked wheel covers. A badly kerbed wheel can be bent, causing vibration. **\$**
- ☐ **Lights and glass.** All lights work; windscreen free of chips in the driver's view. Hazy, yellowed headlight lenses cut light output. **\$**
- ☐ **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. **\$**
- ☐ **SSS: 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, often from hitting kerbs. **\$**
- ☐ **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. **\$**
- ☐ **Suspension.** Push down on each corner: it should bounce back once and settle. Oily shock absorbers leak. **\$**
- ☐ **Brakes.** Deep grooves or a raised edge on the discs mean they're due. **\$**
- ☐ **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.
- ☐ **Water leaks.** Damp carpet, a wet boot floor or a stained headlining. Lift the boot floor.
- ☐ **Wear matches the kilometres.** Steering wheel, gear selector, 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.** Screen, Bluetooth, reversing camera, windows and mirrors. Count the keys.

5 Test drive

- ☐ **CVT automatic.** Smooth, steady pull with no judder, surging, slipping or loud whine. A fault here is an expensive repair; ask when its fluid was changed.
- ☐ **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 cleanly with no stutter, hesitation or smoke, including up a hill.
- ☐ **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 fluid was last changed, if ever.
- ☐ **CVT repairs.** Ask whether the gearbox has been repaired or replaced, and get the paperwork.
- ☐ **Fleet or rental records.** Ex-fleet cars are often well maintained; ask for the log.
- ☐ **Modifications in writing.** Tunes, lowering and exhausts, with engineering sign-off where your state requires it.
- ☐ **Rego and roadworthy.** Rego checked online; roadworthy supplied if your state requires one on sale.

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

4+

recalls on Pulsars built since 2013*

6

common faults reported on Pulsars built since 2013*

2,636

owner complaints on Pulsar sedans (also sold as the Sentra) built 2013–2017*

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