Used Subaru Impreza inspection checklist

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

COVERS **GE/GH** 2007–2011 | **GJ/GP** 2012–2016 | **GK/GT** 2017–2023 | **GU** 2024 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

- ☐ **Rust.** Check the sills, wheel arches, door bottoms and tailgate for bubbling paint or rust. Any of these needs a close look before buying. Rust starting at the edges often spreads underneath before it shows on the surface. $
- ☐ **Crash repair.** Sight down each panel gap and check the paint colour matches across adjoining panels and inside the door jambs. All gaps should look even. Uneven gaps or overspray on rubber seals point to earlier repair work. $
- ☐ **Headlights.** Turn on every light and check each one works and the lens looks clear. Indicators and reverse lights should also be bright and steady. Hazy, yellowed lenses cut night-time visibility and may need polishing. $
- ☐ **Windscreen.** Check the windscreen for chips or cracks, especially near the driver's line of sight. A small chip is cheap to repair but a crack across the glass is not. A chip can spread into a crack quickly once driven on rough roads. $

2 Under the bonnet

- ☐ **Engine oil.** Pull the dipstick and check the oil sits between the marks and looks brown rather than black or gritty. Top it up isn't enough if it's badly overdue. Black, gritty oil suggests servicing has been skipped. $
- ☐ **Coolant.** Check the coolant reservoir is filled to its mark and the coolant looks clean, not rusty or milky. Ask if it needs frequent topping up. Milky or rusty coolant can point to an internal engine leak, which is costly to fix. $
- ☐ **Drive belt.** With the engine off, look at the drive belt for cracks, fraying or glazing on its surface. It should look supple, not shiny or split. A cracked belt can fail without warning and leave you stranded. $
- ☐ **Battery.** Check the battery terminals are clean and free of white powder, and look for a date sticker on the case. A clean, secure battery is what you want to see. A battery over about four years old may need replacing soon. $

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Tyre tread.** Check tread depth on all four tyres is above the wear bars and wears evenly across each one. Uneven tyres can also tell you about the car's alignment. Wear on one edge only points to worn suspension or poor alignment. $
- ☐ **Suspension.** Bounce each corner of the car firmly and check it settles quickly without continuing to bounce. Also look for oily residue around the shock absorbers. A corner that keeps bouncing after you push down means a worn shock absorber. $
- ☐ **Brake discs.** Look at the visible edge of each brake disc through the wheel spokes for deep grooves or a raised outer lip. All four should look smooth and even. A heavily grooved disc or raised lip means it is due for replacement. !
- ☐ **AWD system.** On a gravel or wet section, turn at low speed and listen for grinding or feel for binding through the drivetrain. It should turn smoothly with no resistance. Judder or binding in tight turns points to a fault in the all-wheel drive system. $

4 Interior and electrics

- ☐ **Warning lights.** Turn the key to "on" without starting and check every dash light comes on, then goes out once the engine is running. None should stay lit at idle. An airbag, brake or engine light that stays lit needs an explanation. !
- ☐ **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 smoothly may not hold you firmly in a crash. !
- ☐ **Boot.** Check the spare wheel and jack are present, then lift the boot liner to check underneath for water or rust. It should be dry and free of corrosion. A damp smell under the boot liner often means a rear seal is leaking. $
- ☐ **Air con.** Run the air con for a minute or two and check it blows cold air without a musty smell. It should cool down quickly and stay consistent. A musty smell often means the cabin filter is overdue or mould has built up. $

5 Test drive

- ☐ **Manual clutch.** Manual: in a higher gear at moderate speed, floor the accelerator briefly and feel if the revs rise faster than the car's road speed. They should rise together. A clutch that slips under load will need replacing soon, which is a big cost. $
- ☐ **CVT gearbox.** CVT: pull away gently from a stop and accelerate hard up an incline, feeling for shuddering or a delay before power comes on. Response should feel steady throughout. Shudder or hesitation under load points to a CVT problem that needs attention soon. $

! **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

- [ ] **Brakes.** Brake firmly from speed on an empty road and check the car stops straight with no pulling, pulsing or grinding. The pedal should feel firm throughout. A grinding noise means the pads have worn down to metal. !
- [ ] **Steering.** Check the car tracks straight with no wandering, and the steering feels consistent at all speeds without going heavy or light suddenly. It should feel the same every time. Heavy or inconsistent steering points to a power steering fault. $

6 Documentation

- [ ] **Service history.** Look through the logbook for stamps made on time with matching receipts. There should be no long unexplained gaps between services. Missing stamps or gaps in servicing are worth negotiating the price down for. $
- [ ] **Roadworthy certificate.** Check the registration status online and confirm a current roadworthy certificate is supplied if your state requires one for a private sale. It should be valid and recent. An unregistered car or missing certificate can mean extra cost before you can drive it home.
- [ ] **VIN check.** Find the VIN plate in the engine bay and check it matches the VIN shown on the registration papers. The numbers should line up exactly. A mismatch can mean the car's identity or history has been altered.
- [ ] **Seller's ID.** Check the seller's photo ID matches the name on the rego papers before you hand over any money. It should match exactly with no excuses offered. Any mismatch needs an explanation before you pay anything.

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

9+
recalls on Imprezas built since 2007*

9
common faults reported on Imprezas built since 2007*

2,344
owner complaints on Imprezas built since 2008*

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, 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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