

Used Subaru Liberty inspection checklist

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



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COVERS

5th gen 2009–2014

6th gen 2015–2020

☐ **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 what you're looking at:** four or six cylinders, turbo or diesel; manual or CVT. Diesel, turbo and CVT checks below are marked.
- ☐ **Ask how it was used:** private or fleet; short trips, towing or long country runs? For a turbo, 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. **\$**
- ☐ **Paint on the roof, bonnet and boot.** Faded or peeling clear coat on cars left in the sun. **\$**
- ☐ **Hail and dents.** Look along the roof and bonnet at a low angle to the light for small dimples. **\$**
- ☐ **Wheels.** Kerbed or cracked alloys. A badly kerbed wheel can be bent, causing vibration. **\$**
- ☐ **Rust** on older cars: wheel arches, sills, door bottoms and the boot lid or tailgate. **\$**
- ☐ **Lights and glass.** All lights work, no condensation inside; windscreen free of chips in the driver's view. **\$**
- ☐ **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. Ask how often it's topped up between services. **\$**

- ☐ **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 sides of the flat engine, low down near the wheels, is a leak. **\$**
- ☐ **Turbo: 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, a knock or smoke needs a mechanic. **\$**

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Tyres** above the wear bars, worn evenly and under ~6 years old. All-wheel drive needs four matching tyres; mismatched ones strain the drivetrain. **\$**
- ☐ **AWD:** no oil leaking from the rear diff or drive parts underneath. **\$**
- ☐ **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. Diesel: heavy soot can mean a damaged or removed exhaust filter (DPF). **\$**

! **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 AWD warning that stays on needs explaining.

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- ☐ **Water leaks.** Damp carpet, a wet boot floor or a stained headlining. A damp headlining can mean blocked sunroof drains.

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- ☐ **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 sunroof. 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.

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- ☐ **Manual.** In 4th at 50 km/h, floor it: if revs rise faster than speed, the clutch is slipping.

\$
- ☐ **Engine.** Pulls smoothly with no stutter, sudden power loss or smoke. Diesel: ask how often the exhaust filter light has come on.

\$

- ☐ **AWD.** In a car park, drive slowly on full lock both ways: no binding, clunking or juddering.

\$
- ☐ **Brakes.** Firm pedal; stops straight with no pulling, pulsing or grinding.

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- ☐ **Steering and suspension.** Drives straight; no knocks over bumps. A hum that grows with speed is often a wheel bearing.

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- ☐ **Afterwards,** check for new drips, a steady temperature gauge and no hot or burning-oil 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 about timing-belt replacement, and when the CVT fluid was last changed.

\$
- ☐ **Engine and gearbox work.** Ask whether either 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.
- ☐ **Rego and roadworthy.** Rego checked online; roadworthy supplied if your state requires one on sale.

\$

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

5+

recalls on Liberties built since 2009*

7

common faults reported on Liberties built since 2009*

1,598

owner complaints on Liberties (also sold as the Legacy) built 2010–2019*

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