Used Toyota Prius inspection checklist

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

COVERS **XW30** 2009–2015 **XW50** 2016–2022

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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

- ☐ **Windscreen.** Check the windscreen closely for cracks or chips, especially spreading from the edges. A crack that's started can spread quickly with heat or a small bump.
- ☐ **Panels.** Walk around checking panel gaps are even and paint colour matches on every panel, including inside door jambs. Mismatched colour or overspray on seals points to past crash repair. $
- ☐ **Lights.** Turn on every light including indicators and reverse light, and check headlight lenses are clear, not hazy or yellowed. Yellowed lenses reduce how far the lights reach at night. $

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 low level between services can point to the engine burning oil. $
- ☐ **Coolant.** Check the main coolant tank is filled to the mark and the coolant looks clean, not rusty or milky. Crusty residue near the front of the engine often means a leaking water pump. $
- ☐ **Hybrid coolant tank.** Find the separate coolant tank for the hybrid inverter system and check the level sits at the mark. This tank is easy to miss and often gets ignored at servicing. $
- ☐ **Brake fluid.** Check the brake fluid in the small reservoir at the back of the engine bay is clear to light amber, not dark. Dark fluid means it hasn't been changed in a long time, which affects braking. !

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Underbody rust.** Crouch down and look along the floor and around the suspension mounts for rust, bent metal or fresh welds. A single clean patch among older grime can hide a repair. !
- ☐ **Suspension.** Push down firmly on each corner of the car and let go; it should bounce back once and settle, with no oily residue on the shock absorbers. Oily shocks or repeated bouncing mean they're worn. $
- ☐ **Tyre tread.** Check tread depth is well above the wear bars on all four tyres and that wear looks even across each tyre. Wear on one edge only points to wheels out of alignment. $

4 Interior and electrics

- ☐ **Warning lights.** Press start to "on" and check every dash light comes on then goes out once the car is in Ready mode. A battery, brake or engine warning light that stays lit needs explaining before you buy. !
- ☐ **Hybrid battery vent.** Find the hybrid battery cooling vent, usually behind a rear seat panel, and check it's clear of dust, pet hair or stored items. A blocked vent can let the hybrid battery overheat and wear out early. $
- ☐ **Seatbelts.** Pull each seatbelt out fully and let it retract, checking it latches firmly with no fraying in the webbing. Fraying or a belt that doesn't retract smoothly is a safety issue in a crash. !
- ☐ **Touchscreen.** Test the main touchscreen including Bluetooth or CarPlay pairing and menu response. A slow, frozen or blank screen points to an electronics fault that can be costly to fix. $
- ☐ **Reversing camera.** Engage reverse and check the reversing camera image is clear, not dark, distorted or dropping out. A faulty camera is a common and annoying electronics fault to chase down. $
- ☐ **Wiper coverage.** Check the wipers sweep the full width of the windscreen in front of the driver, leaving no large unwiped patch. A poor sweep pattern leaves a blind spot in rain that can't be adjusted away. $

5 Test drive

- ☐ **Hybrid battery performance.** Drive a mix of low and higher speeds and watch how often and how far the car runs on electric power alone before the engine kicks in. The engine joining in very early or often, with electric range feeling short, points to a tired hybrid battery. $
- ☐ **Hybrid drive handover.** Pull away on electric power at low speed and check the engine joins in smoothly, with no surging, cutting out or warning lights. Any jerk or hesitation as the engine joins in is worth questioning. $

! **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 a quiet road; the car should stop straight with no pulling, pulsing or grinding through the pedal. Hybrid brakes feel different but should still feel progressive, not grabby or spongy. !
- [ ] **Steering.** Drive straight on a flat road and check the car tracks true without pulling or drifting, and listen for knocks over bumps. Wander at speed or clunks over bumps point to worn steering or suspension parts. $
- [ ] **Air conditioning.** Run the air conditioning on its coldest setting for a few minutes and check it blows consistently cold air. Weak or warm airflow points to a refrigerant leak or failing compressor. $

6 Documentation

- [ ] **Service history.** Check the logbook is stamped on time with matching receipts, including any hybrid battery health check reports. Gaps in the history, especially missing battery checks, can mean deferred maintenance you'll inherit. $
- [ ] **Registration.** Check the car's registration status online to confirm it's current and matches the seller's details before you commit to buying.
- [ ] **Roadworthy certificate.** Ask for a current roadworthy certificate if your state requires one to be supplied before the car can be sold and registered in your name.

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

3+
recalls on Priuses built since 2009*

9
common faults reported on Priuses built since 2009*

6,217
owner complaints on Priuses built 2010–2022*

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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