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'How to inspect the car' checklist

- Check the car's mileage.** The average covered is around 10,000 miles a year, so if the odometer's figure appears wildly out for its age, ask why. If the answer doesn't stack up, be suspicious. Crooks may have 'clocked' the odometer.

You can also check the last service for the mileage to see if this is in line with the figure. An HPI check will also check this.

- Overall condition.** Cast a beady eye over the car's condition, crouching down to look for scratches and dents.
- Check repairs.** See if there are any signs of poor repair, such as gaps between body panels after crash damage.
- Check the oil.** Do this by lifting out the dipstick to see if the level's correct.
- The engine.** Look at the engine for signs of oil or water leaks, as well as the surrounding parts – and look under the car for any signs of leaks too.
- Test the radio.** Plus all other gadgets to make sure they work.
- Turn on the lights!** Check these work, and that you can open and close the windows easily.
- Is it safe?** Vitally, does the car seem in safe condition to drive. Trust your gut – if the seats are sagging and the car looks like it's ready for the scrap heap, continue your search elsewhere.
- What about the tyres?** Check for tread and inflation.