



Initially:

Any "bad" records in a VIN history report?
Any maintenance records, mileage proof?
How many previous owners?
Why are they selling the car - tired of fixing it?
Any accidents, engine, transmission repair?
Has the car passed Emission Tests?
Has the car passed MOT?
Is the car taxed?

Exterior - Indications of possible problem:

Are the exterior lines not straight? Ripples? Misaligned panels?
Driver's door has free play in the hinges? Troubles to close?
Are the gaps between panels too narrow (too wide) on one side of the car?
Lots of rusty spots?
Mismatched colors? Painting over spray?
Any panel of the car seems to be repainted?
Why? Accident? Corrosion?
Tow hook? The car was using for towing?

Indications of possible engine problem:

Any oil or coolant leaks from the engine?
Is the engine dirty or oily?
Is the oil level low? Is the oil on the dipstick too dark?
Any indication of poor quality repair work / lack of maintenance?
(e.g. badly corroded battery terminals, very low oil level, etc.)

Start the engine:

Does it work unevenly?
Any knocking, pinging, whistling?
Any smoke? (slight water steam is OK)
Any warning lights come on while the engine is running?
"Check engine" light?
Is the engine oil pressure too low at idle?
Any hesitation on acceleration?
Is the engine powerful?
Does it look very dirty under the oil cap?
Smell of burnt oil under the hood?

Possible automatic transmission problems:

Any previous transmission repair? Was it rebuilt?
Does the transmission fluid smell burnt?
Is the tranny fluid on the dipstick too dark/dirty?
Start the engine and try to switch from P to D and from P to R holding the brakes -
Is the time between shifting and the moment the transmission kicks in too long?
Any strong noises or jerks?

During a test drive:

Any delays or troubles shifting?
Any shudder? Does the transmission slip or jerk harshly?
Is the shifting delayed?
Does the kick-down function work?

The manual transmission:

Any leaks?
Any noises while driving?
Any troubles changing gears?
Is the clutch slipping?
Any trouble to shift into reverse?

The suspension problems:

Are any of shock absorbers leaking?
Are any of the shock absorber boots broken?
Does the steering have any notable free play?
Does the car bounce too much when you push one of the corners down?
Tyres have irregular wear? (alignment problem)
Does the car sit level?

During a driving test:

Any knocking or creaking noises when driving over bumps?
Does the car pull aside? Is the steering wheel out of center?
Does the steering wheel wobble?
Does the vehicle feel unstable on a freeway?
Any humming or growling noise?

The brakes. Possible problem:

Is the brake fluid container leaky?
Is the brake fluid level too low?
Brake pedal goes down to the floor? Break pedal is too soft (spongy)? Too hard? Any brake fluid leaks under the car?
Badly corroded brake lines? Brake rotors appear corroded?

During the test drive:

Any brake pedal or steering pulsation while braking?
Does the vehicle pull aside while braking?
Any grinding noise?
Does the brake warning light or ABS light come on while driving?

Tyres:

Any cracks, bruises?
Tread appears low?
Mismatched tires?
Damaged rims?
Vibration at high speed?
Humming noise? (uneven tyre wear?)

The interior:

Is the driver seat / steering wheel worn excessively?
Dampness under the carpet or in the trunk?
Does the Radio / CD / Tape work?
Has the odometer any evidences of being tampered?
Does the air conditioner provide really cold air?
Are the power locks, windows, mirrors, sunroof, etc. working?
Are the heater, rear window defogger working?
Wind noise while driving?
Any of warning lights come on while driving?
Do you feel comfortable in the driver's seat?
Seats, seat belts, mirrors, controls, steering, visibility?
Spare tyre, jack, wheel wrench?