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Project Car Check List

With this checklist, we hope to help guide you through a safe project car purchase. Whenever possible, bring several knowledgeable friends along to aid you in your initial inspection. Individual factors that should influence your choice of project cars include personal ability or aptitude, finances, and what is to be expected from the new toy, i.e., driver, full resto, etc. A decoding guide will also be extremely helpful. It would be impossible to explain exactly where to look and what to look for on each model, so use this list as a common sense guide to making an educated decision.

BODY

Look for badly rusted, damaged or missing parts, excessive use of bondo and poor attempts at repairs. Check all gaps for hints of a twisted body, causing poor panel alignment. Scratched glass could be costly and/or time consuming. Trim can be hard to find and costly, too.

- Hood
- Quarter panels
- Grille
- Trim
- Roof/top
- Fenders
- Decklid
- Bezels
- Glass
- Rear shelf
- Doors/door frame
- Cowl
- Bumpers
- Rockers
- Tail panel
- Splash pans
- Jambs
- Lights
- Moldings
- Misc.

INTERIOR

Remember the four C's: correctness, condition, completeness and collectibility. Interior restoration is inexpensive compared with other areas, yet some dash pads and parts can be very expensive. Underdash wiring can really get butchered over the years, so take a long, hard look.

- Dash
- Dash cluster
- Wiring
- Carpet
- Options
- Seats
- Console
- Shifter
- Door panels
- Trim
- Chrome
- Headliner
- Accessories
- Emblems
- Aftermarket
- Butcher jobs
- Misc.

UNDERCARRIAGE

A lift is by far the best way to inspect an undercarriage, so use one whenever possible. Rusty framerrails can be relatively expensive to repair, so spend some time poking around. Look past the obvious and beware of hidden items that could slow or stop your restoration trek. The rust monster lives here.

- Rust
- Matching numbers
- Missing/bent linkages
- Non-original equipment
- Floors
- Leaks
- Rails
- Exhaust
- Trans
- Rockers
- Suspension
- Stress cracks
- Rear
- K-frame
- Radiator support
- Cables
- Block
- Fuel tank
- Mounts
- Linkage

Lines Misc.

MOTOR COMPARTMENT

The four C's go a long way here, too. Originality is the key to a quality, correct restoration, and starting with the right pieces will certainly expedite the procedure. Use a decoding guide like those from Galen Govier.

 Matching numbers Correct accessories Firewall/apron rust Overall condition Running condition Underside of hood Wiring Carbs Pulleys Fuel/brake lines A/C parts and lines Correct hardware Air cleaner Linkages Radiator Correct parts Pumps Brackets Misc.

TRUNK

Although a small area of the car, some of these parts can be difficult to find. For instance, B-bodies can use up to four different spare tire hold-down bolts. Original equipment here can save a lot of grief.

 Jack/base/handle Floor and/or trunk extension rust Hold-down hardware Decklid underside Spare Vent lines Wiring Trough Fill tube Shock mounts Misc.

TEST DRIVE

When possible, take the car for a test drive and have a friend follow in another vehicle. Look for:

- Crab-walking
- Rattles/squeaks
- Overall response
- Brakes
- Smoke
- Running condition
- Functioning accessories
- Ride
- Handling
- Wandering
- Shifting
- Misc.

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