

The Mod A Mini Guide to:

Buying The Right Mini For You

So you want to buy a Mini... but not sure on what to look out for?

Then you are in the right place! Below are the key checkpoints to consider when looking at a Mini - not all are hard and fast requirements, but remember that you can use these to barter down the price if needed.

To avoid throwing too much information at you, here is a quick checklist of some of the things to look out for.

The Brief Guide:

- Price Comparison - Is it a good price?
- Vehicle History Report - Is it legally purchasable?
- Maintenance Records - Has it been looked after?
- Mileage - Has it driven to the Moon?
- Suspension & Steering - Does it make unusual noises?
- Rust - Has it been dragged up from the bottom of the sea?
- Clutch - Is it riding high?
- Engine & Transmission - Is it smooth?
- Electrical Systems - Does everything work?
- Tyres & Brakes - Do you need to replace these ASAP?
- Interior Condition - Has the previous owner been careful?
- Timing Chain & Tensioner - Is it rattling to hell and back?
- Oil Leaks - Is it a drip or is it a waterfall?
- Suspension Bushings - Squeaky, squeaky?
- Cooling System - Does the gauge stay at ideal?
- Exhaust System - Is it all good condition?
- Title & Ownership - Is the seller the actual owner?
- Test Drive - Go see what she drives like?



The following pages within this booklet explain why each step is important and what exactly you are checking against!

Minis are fantastic cars.

There is a reason why Minis are one of the most popular cars on UK roads, but they benefit greatly from a bit of love and TLC - especially if you aren't mechanically minded yourself.

Use these notes to make sure that the MINI you are viewing, is the car for you!



Vehicle History Report:

Obtain a vehicle report (e.g. HPI report) to check for accidents, title issues, and other potential red flags. You can do this prior to arranging a viewing if you know the registration plate to avoid buying a car that cannot legally be sold.

Price Comparison:

Research the market value of the specific Mini model and trim you're interested in to ensure you're getting a fair price.



Maintenance Records:

Check if the seller has a complete record of maintenance and service history. These receipts can give you insight into how well the car has been cared for.



Mileage:


Evaluate the mileage on the vehicle. Lower mileage is generally considered better - but very low mileage on an older car may also indicate it has been sitting for long periods, which can lead to its own set of issues. A higher mileage car has, more often than not, reached those higher miles because the owner has looked after and maintained it well.

NOTE: Some sellers may be looking to shift the car because it has reached a mileage/age at which more substantial work may be required, like the timing chain. You can get a good price deal on these cars, but you cannot safely ignore getting the job done yourself!




Suspension and Steering:

Test the steering for any unusual noises or vibrations. The Mini has a sporty suspension, so it should feel firm but not excessively harsh.

"Donking" or squeaking when you turn the steering could come from perishing top mounts 

"Clinking" or "Clonking" sounds could be anti-roll bar links 

"Knocking" noises could be weakened balljoints 



Check the suspension bushings for wear. Worn bushings can affect handling and ride quality.

Is there adverse movement in the wheels while it is parked? Can you hear any squeaking or knocking noises if you push up and down on the Mini?



If the Mini has a manual transmission, pay attention to the clutch. A worn clutch can incur a decent amount of labour to replace. If the clutch is very heavy, to press the pedal, it also means it is on its way out as the springs in the pressure plate have gone stiff and lost their flex.

Is the clutch pedal very high? Does it rev high when driving forwards when you press the accelerator pedal? Is there a slight rattle that goes away when the clutch pedal is depressed?



TIP: If you are unsure on what pricing to expect, get in contact with the specific registration of the vehicle for an up-to-date estimation if you were to book into our sister workshop - Torque Monkey - on 01245 698027!



Tyres and Brakes:

Check the condition of the tyres and brakes. Worn-out tyres or brakes will need immediate replacement. Low brake pads may squeak whilst driving or the brake pad wear sensor may be on the dash. If your discs are wearing, they may have a 'lip' on the edge that you will be able to feel.

NOTE: Cars that have been standing for a long period of time will likely have perished tyres. Rusty discs are not necessarily a problem as most of the rust will wear off once being used again, but may need replacing a little sooner than normal.



TIP: Place a 20p coin into the main tread grooves of the tyre. If the outer rim of the 20p is visible, then the tyres may be illegal and unsafe and should be checked by a professional

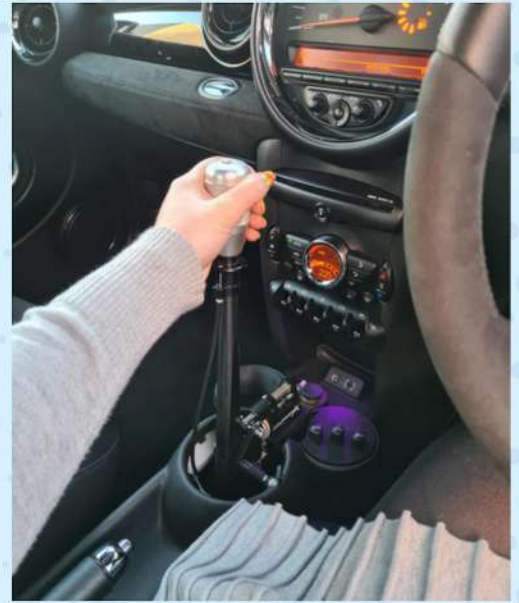




Engine and Transmission:

Ensure that the engine runs smoothly and doesn't produce unusual noises or excessive smoke. Check for any transmission issues in all the gears (including reverse) like slipping or rough gear shifts.

NOTE: It is important that you can start the car from cold so feel the temperature of the engine bay with the back of your hand to make sure that the seller hasn't got it hot before you arrived!



Cooling System:

Verify that the cooling system is in good condition. Overheating can lead to serious engine problems that can cause significant damage even if you let it cool down.



NOTE: Let the engine run until the temperature gauge reaches 'ideal' and watch to see if it goes any higher. Turn on the heaters inside the Mini to make sure that the air comes out hot.

Timing Chain and Tensioner:

90% of modern Mini models use a timing chain, which should last longer than a timing or cam belt. However, check if the chain and tensioner have been replaced or need replacement.

NOTE: A rattle on cold start-up that disappears after a minute may well be a 'sticky' tensioner. Hydraulic chain tensioners use oil supplied from an oil pump inside the engine to maintain chain tension automatically. However, if they are not maintaining the appropriate tension as soon as the car starts, the chain can slap against the plastic guide rails creating a temporary rattle. If the rattle does not disappear, you may need a new timing chain as the links will stretch with inappropriate wear.

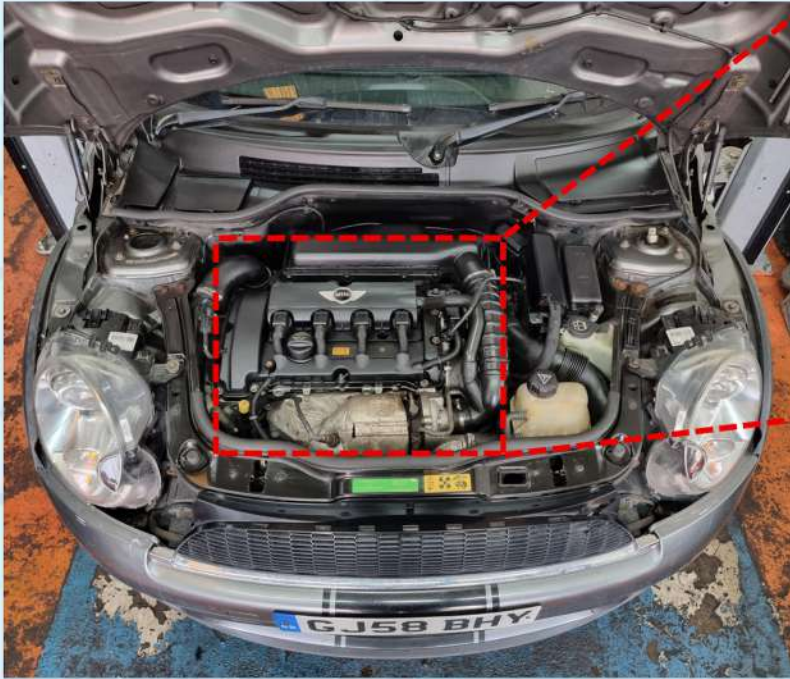


This is why it is important that you see the car from cold - otherwise these rattles may not be there for you to observe and will be an unwanted surprise once you bring the car home!





Oil Leaks:

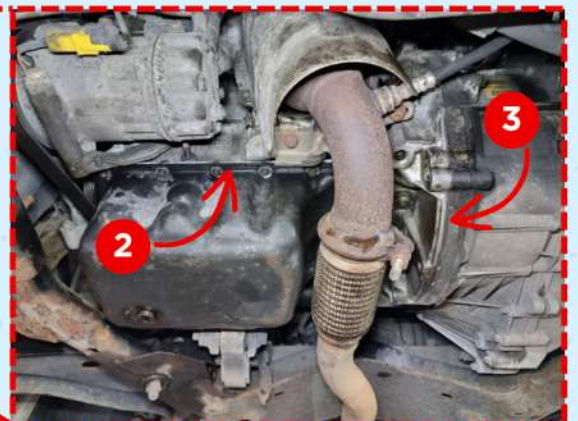
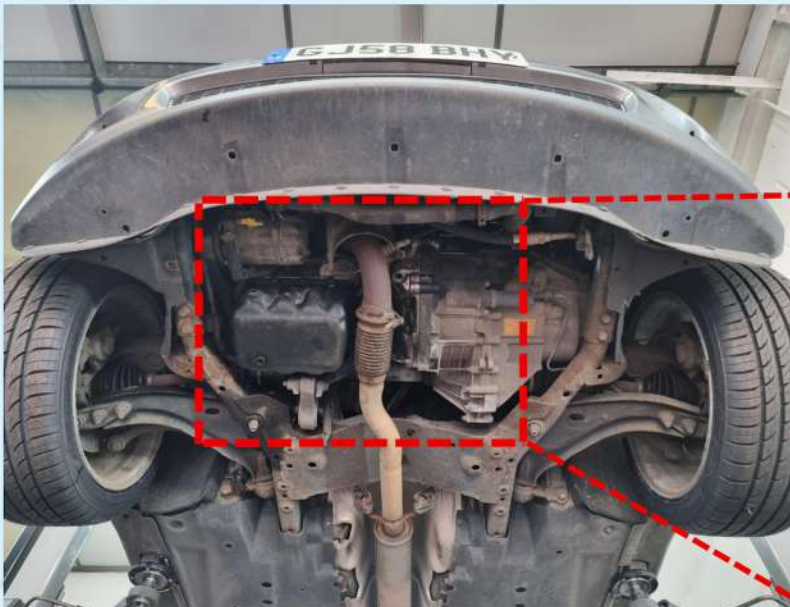
Look for oil leaks around the engine and transmission. Minis can be prone to oil leaks, so this is an important check. You may not be able to see much of the engine on the side of the road, but the below images should help to locate the most common areas.

NOTE: Make sure that you check the oil level using the dipstick whilst the car is cold and on a flat, level surface. It is useful to bring a rag or tissue with you as the seller may not have one available. It is important to make sure that the oil level is correct before starting the car. If the oil is not showing on the dipstick at this stage, unless you are able to accommodate potential mechanical work, walk away and view a different vehicle. After the test drive, check that the oil level has remained the same.



The common gaskets for issues are:

-  Rocker cover gasket **1**
-  Sump gasket **2**
-  Oil filter housing gasket *
-  Oil cooler gasket * **3**
-  Rear main oil seal
(found behind the flywheel - quite a major job)



TIP: You can also check the floor where the car has been parked to see if there are any oil spots or leaks where it has dripped down. Freshly leaked oil will still be damp and most likely black as opposed to clear water. If you can see drips of clear fluid, this may point to a coolant leak.

** Not easy to see with vehicle complete and on the floor*



Interior Condition:

Assess the condition of the interior, including seats, dashboard, and trim. Look for signs of excessive wear or damage. You may also require ISO-fix, so check that the Mini you are looking at includes this (some may not have had these fitted as a factory optional extra.)

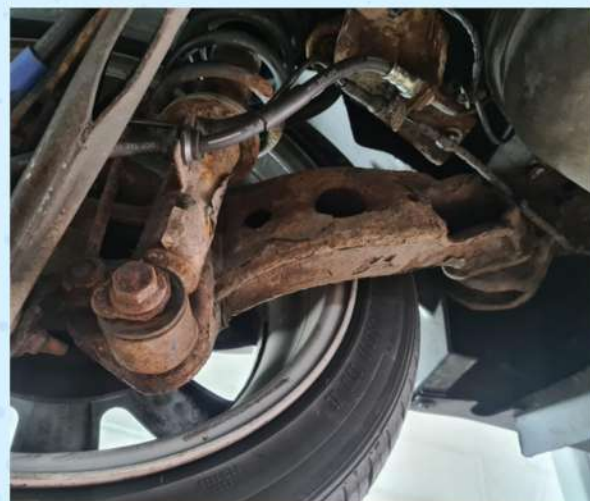


Electrical Systems:

Test all electrical components, including lights, power windows, air conditioning, and the stereo. Electrical issues can be common in older cars.

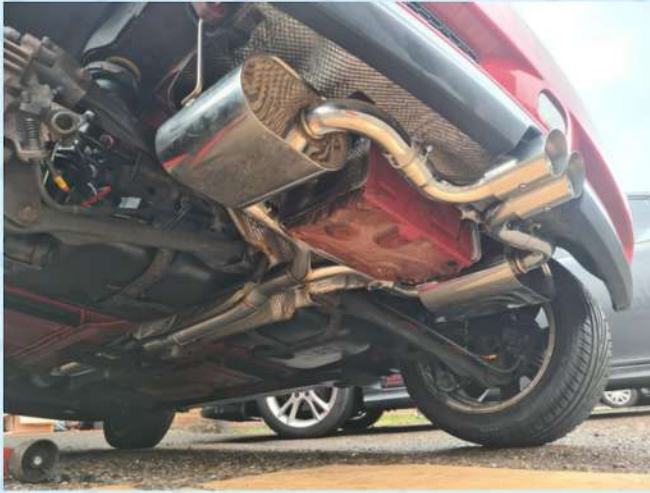


Areas for common rust on car exterior



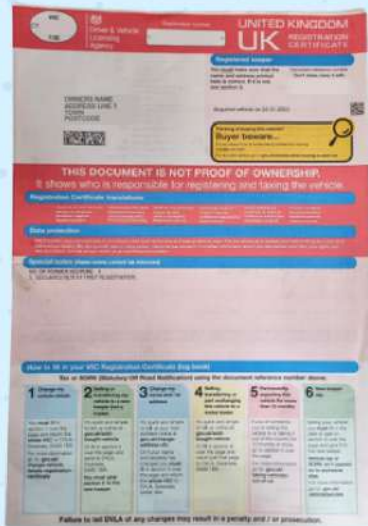
Rust:

Inspect the car for rust, especially around the suspension, subframes, door seals, boot and rear lights. MINIs can have rust issues, so this is a crucial point to check.



Exhaust System:

Inspect the exhaust system for rust and damage. Replacing exhaust components can be costly. Listen for any tones that may suggest that there is a blow in the exhaust from damage or joins.



Title and Ownership:

Verify the title and address on the Owner's Logbook (V5 document) and make sure there are no liens or legal issues with the car.

Once you have thoroughly inspected the vehicle, now it is time to take the Mini for a Test Drive:

Pay attention to how it handles, accelerates, and brakes. Listen for unusual noises. Be prepared for the seller to request your driving licence and/or insurance details if you will be driving the vehicle yourself.



NOTE: Take caution when testing the vehicle to stay within speed limits and respect the car as it doesn't belong to you until money and paperwork has been exchanged.

Don't forget, you don't have to buy the first Mini you find! Take your time and make a decision based on budget, overall condition of the car and how much time and expertise you can put towards maintaining your new purchase. We are ready to help you with new modifications and purchases whenever you are!



So you own your new Mini... now what?

- Fill out the new keeper section on the V5 Vehicle Logbook with the seller and take the green slip on page 3 with you. You will need this to tax this vehicle while you wait for the new logbook to arrive.**

NOTE: We personally advise that you complete the online DVLA form at the time of purchase so that you know your details have been submitted. This eliminates the potential delay of the seller not sending off the logbook. The online DVLA service is available between 7am and 7pm.

- Do you need to get fuel for your journey home? Where is your nearest station?**

NOTE: The initial extra cost for premium fuel is often outweighed by the benefits of using better fuel in your new car. We would recommend using Shell V-Power, Momentum 99, or your local equivalent. Premium fuel helps your engine to run smoother and cleaner, which can improve performance and economy with regular use.

- Book in with our sister workshop - Torque Monkey - on 01245 698027 for a FREE New Vehicle Check to make sure that you are ahead of any future bills, repairs and/or servicing.**

We will complete visual checks on suspension, brakes and bodywork, as well as all fluid levels, including oil, coolant, clutch and brake fluid and power steering fluid. We can also show you how to monitor these yourself if you are not confident. We can advise on any future work that you may need and price estimates accordingly. When our customers know in advance of any potential issues, it makes budgeting much easier and the vehicle is more reliable for you too.

- GO AND ENJOY YOUR NEW MINI!**

Don't forget we can supply and ship all maintenance items, bolt-on modifications and performance parts and kits that your Mini may need during your ownership. This is perfect for customers who are not able to visit Torque Monkey in Essex as we can send across the UK and even worldwide. We pride ourselves on having a great reputation for giving advice and providing high quality parts - why not see for yourself!