

Used Van Buyer's Checklist (Printable)

(Use this checklist to ensure you cover all bases when **buying a used van for camper conversion**. It's broken into phases – you can tick them off as you complete each step.)

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1. Planning & Research:

- ☐ Define your needs: van size, roof height, must-have features (e.g., LWB high roof for shower, or small van for city travel).
- ☐ Set your total budget (van + conversion) and target van price. Remember 70/30 or 60/40 rule for van/build split.
- ☐ Research reliable models and common faults of each (Transit, Sprinter, Ducato, etc.). Decide on a short-list of models.
- ☐ Check insurance groups/quotes for those models (a high-roof Sprinter may cost more to insure than a Transit, for example).
- ☐ If in a ULEZ city, ensure the model/year is Euro 6 or plan for charges.
- ☐ Browse market prices for your chosen models: note year/mileage vs price for reference..
- ☐ List any equipment you'll need to add (windows, AC, etc.) that might influence van choice.

2. Finding Vans for Sale:

- ☐ Search online listings (Auto Trader, Gumtree, Facebook Marketplace, etc.) using filters for your criteria (price, location, size).
- ☐ Check dealer websites and local van dealers.
- ☐ Set alerts for new listings if possible (so you can act fast on good ones).
- ☐ Avoid ads with scant info or no photos; focus on detailed listings from sellers who seem honest.
- ☐ When contacting sellers, prepare initial questions:
 - ☐ Is the V5C present and in their name?
 - ☐ Can they share reg and VIN for history check?
 - ☐ Service history available?

- ☐ Any major issues or modifications?

3. Vehicle History Check (before viewing):

- ☐ Run a [CarVertical report](#) or HPI check using the reg/VIN provided.
 - ☐ Verify mileage records (no rollbacks).
 - ☐ Check for accidents/insurance write-offs.
 - ☐ Check theft status.
 - ☐ Check outstanding finance.
 - ☐ Note number of previous owners.
- ☐ Look up **MOT history** on gov.uk:
 - ☐ Note MOT due date.
 - ☐ Read past fails/advisories for recurring issues (rust, brakes, etc.).
 - ☐ Ensure mileage progression is consistent year to year.
- ☐ If anything alarming in history (e.g., mileage discrepancy, Category S write-off, unpaid finance), clarify with seller or consider skipping that van.

4. Viewing & Inspection (bring this checklist along):

- ☐ **Documents:** Verify V5C details match van (reg, VIN, color, owner). Check service records and any receipts – take photos of them for later reference.
- ☐ **Exterior:**
 - ☐ Body condition: dents, scratches, alignment of panels.
 - ☐ **Rust check:** Wheel arches, sills, door bottoms, underbody, around windscreen. Press suspect areas for crackling.
 - ☐ Doors: open/close all. Locks working on each (including sliding and rear).
 - ☐ Seals: window and door seals intact (no obvious water leaks).
 - ☐ Glass: no large cracks or many chips. Mirrors intact.
 - ☐ Lights: all external lights work (headlights high/low, indicators, brakes, reverse, fog).
 - ☐ Tires: tread depth > 1.6mm (use coin or gauge); no uneven wear or bulges. Spare tire present and ok.
 - ☐ Wheels: no major dents in rims; all wheel nuts present.
 - ☐ Suspension: bounce each corner – van settles after 1 rebound.
 - ☐ Signs of leaks under engine or stains on ground.
- ☐ **Engine Bay:**

- ☐ Fluids: oil level correct (and clean, no milky sludge); coolant level and color good (no oil in it); brake fluid level ok; power steering fluid ok.
- ☐ Belts: no cracks/fraying; hoses good (no bulges or cracks).
- ☐ Battery terminals clean; battery secure.
- ☐ Look for leaks (oil, coolant) around engine, radiator, hoses.
- ☐ Check VIN stamp in engine bay matches V5C.

☐ **Cabin:**

- ☐ Seat condition – no excessive wear beyond mileage.
- ☐ Dashboard: turn key to ignition, ensure all warning lights illuminate then off (airbag, ABS, engine light etc.) – none stay on persistently.
- ☐ Electronics: test electric windows, mirrors, radio, horn, wipers/washers, interior lights, cigarette lighter/12V sockets.
- ☐ Climate: fan blower works at all speeds; A/C if equipped (does it blow cold?); heater blows hot.
- ☐ Gauges: fuel, temp, etc. working.
- ☐ OBD scan (if you brought a scanner) – any error codes?
- ☐ Check odd smells (fuel, coolant, mold).
- ☐ Visibility: no severe cracks in windshield in driver's view.
- ☐ Parking brake engages and releases properly.

☐ **Cargo Area:**

- ☐ Overall condition (was it heavily used? Dents in floor?).
- ☐ Any dampness or water entry signs inside?
- ☐ If partially converted, examine the quality of any work (wiring, insulation, etc.).
- ☐ Bulkhead (if present) – note if you will remove it.

☐ **Test Drive:**

- ☐ Cold start: starts easily? Unusual noises on startup? Excess smoke?
- ☐ Idle: smooth idle at correct RPM.
- ☐ Steering: no excessive play; van tracks straight on a flat road.
- ☐ Suspension: no clunks over bumps; ride is reasonably smooth.
- ☐ Acceleration: pulls well, no hesitations or misfires.
- ☐ Gears (manual): shifts smooth in all gears (test 1st to reverse); clutch not slipping (no rev flare under load).
- ☐ Gears (auto): shifts without jerks; no warning lights.
- ☐ Braking: brakes straight and strong (no pull or vibration); ABS engages (if tested in safe area); no grinding noises.
- ☐ Engine temp: reaches normal range and stays (no overheating).
- ☐ Noise: listen for wheel bearing hum, wind whistles, drivetrain clunk, etc. at various speeds.
- ☐ Turn tight circles both ways: no clicking (CV joints) or binding.

- ☐ Parking: test reverse gear and maneuvering; check any parking sensors/camera if fitted.
- ☐ After drive: no fluid leaks emerging; no new warning lights.
- ☐ **Mechanic Inspection (if doing one):** Arrange after your initial check, before purchase commitment. Share any concerns you have with the inspector.

5. Negotiation:

- ☐ Make a list of issues found and estimated costs to fix.
- ☐ Check market price of comparable vans again factoring those issues.
- ☐ Decide your target price and max price.
- ☐ Begin negotiation politely, using evidence:
 - ☐ e.g., "I'll need to put new tires and fix the rust spot, that's about £500, so can we reduce the price by that?"
- ☐ If seller counters, be prepared to split difference or hold firm depending on your max.
- ☐ If price can't come down, see if seller will include repairs (e.g., do MOT, replace battery) or add extras (spare accessories, etc.).
- ☐ Don't be afraid to walk away if the deal isn't right – better to lose a bit of time than buy a bad van at too high a price.
- ☐ Once agreed, reiterate the terms ("So, £8,700 and you'll get a fresh MOT, correct?").
- ☐ Get the agreement in writing (even a text or email summarizing price and any promises).

6. Purchase & Paperwork:

- ☐ Payment method arranged (bank transfer, etc.). Avoid paying large cash if possible; if so, do it safely at a bank.
- ☐ Verify seller's ID (especially if private) – matches logbook name.
- ☐ Fill out V5C together:
 - ☐ Seller completes section for transferring to you, or does online transfer.
 - ☐ You get the green new keeper slip (V5C/2).
- ☐ Write a receipt for both parties: include price, van details (reg/VIN), "sold as seen", date, both sign.
- ☐ Ensure you have all keys (and ask about any missing spare keys).
- ☐ Collect service books, manuals, spare parts, etc. that come with van.

- ☐ **Tax the van** online or via phone immediately (don't drive untaxed).
- ☐ **Insure the van** (have policy ready to start on pickup day).
- ☐ Double-check you have breakdown cover or add it.
- ☐ Thank the seller – politeness can help if you need to follow up on something small later.

7. After Purchase – Immediate To-Dos:

- ☐ Drive carefully on the way home, getting used to the van.
- ☐ Within first days: perform full service (oil, filters, etc.) unless just done.
- ☐ Book/perform any critical maintenance (timing belt if due, replace tires/brakes that were poor, etc.).
- ☐ Fix minor issues noted (bulbs out, etc.).
- ☐ Keep an eye for any leaks or problems in first weeks and address them.
- ☐ Begin conversion planning (measure van, sketch layout).
- ☐ Enjoy the journey – you've done the hard part of buying wisely!