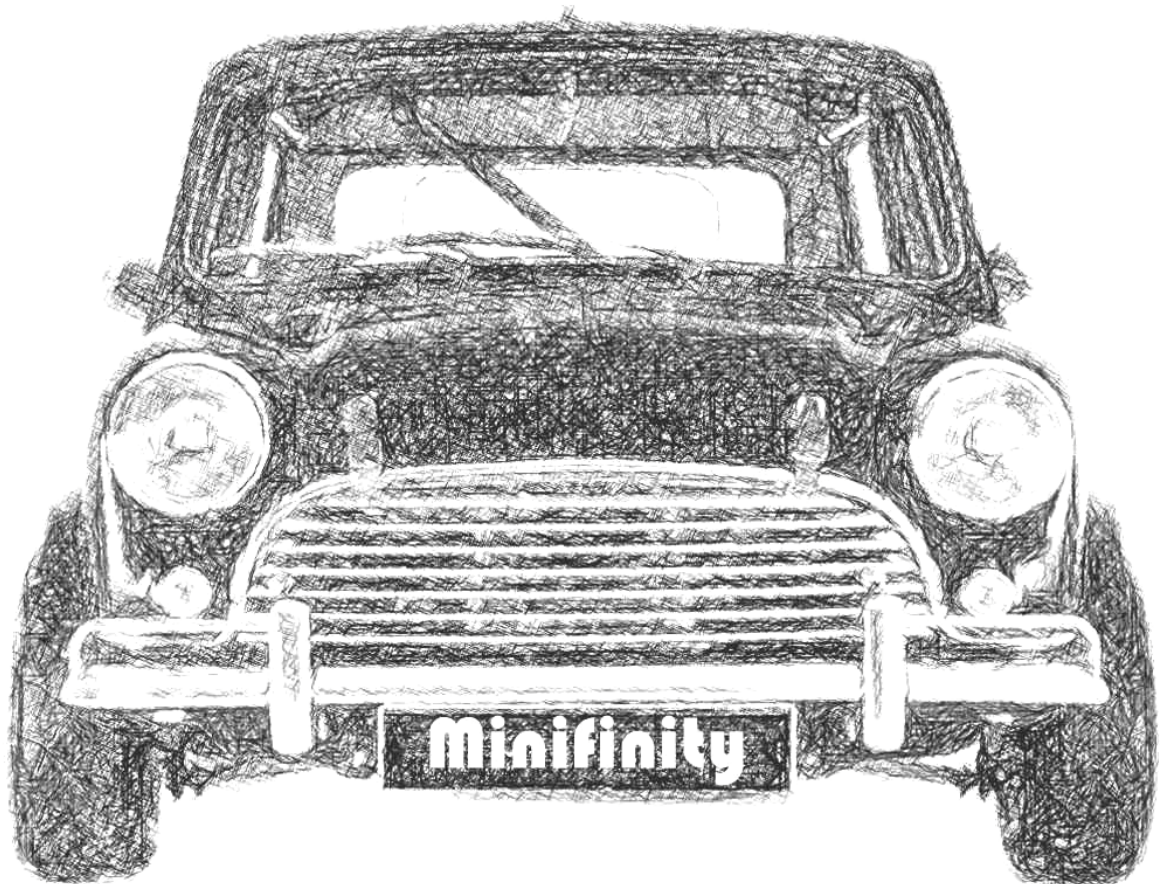


Ultimate Mini Buyers Guide



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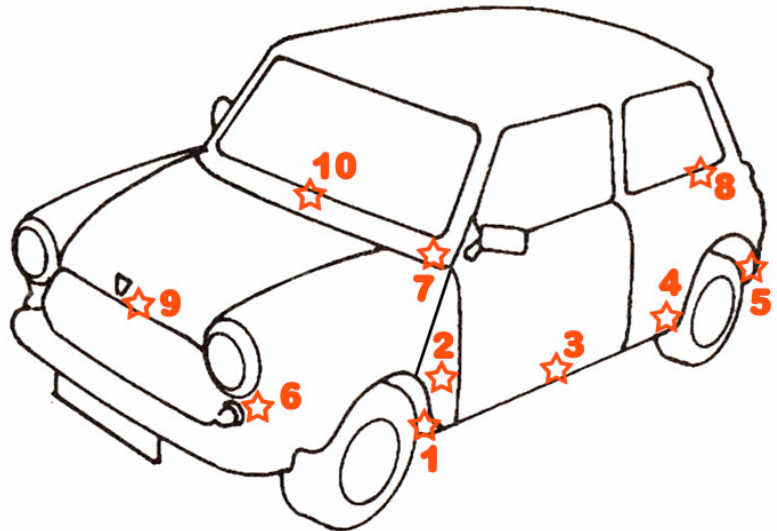
1 Before you go to view a car

- Always arrange to meet the seller at their home or place of work. Never “meet them halfway” or go to a neutral site, as it has been known for people to use this as a ploy to steal YOUR car while you’re test-driving the car they’ve previously stolen!
- When replying to an advert, always say “I’m calling about the car you have for sale”, If the response is along the lines of “Which One”, it’s likely that it’s a trader. BE WARNED... They know an awful lot of BODGE TRICKS.
- Never view a car in the rain, in poor light or at night. It might be more convenient, but it’s so much harder to spot bad paintwork or bodged work. However, sodium lights (streetlights) do show up colour differences very well!
- Always allow yourself enough time to get to the seller’s house and view the car at your leisure. Many a bad decision has been made through the prospective buyer getting lost on the way, and hence having to hurry to examine the car. Giving a car a thorough inspection and test-drive is going to take at LEAST an hour, sometimes more.
- Take a few items with you. These could include a torch, a piece of carpet to kneel on, a small magnet and possibly an adjustable spanner. If you are going to carry out a full inspection underneath the car, it may also be advisable to take a trolley jack you trust and a couple of axle stands for safety.

2 Bodywork

1. **Foot board.** Behind the front wheel, where the inner wheel arch meets the floor pan is a very high-risk area. Make sure any repairs here have not been bodged. Whilst you're down there also check out the floor pan at the front, and make sure no one has jacked the car up on the floor pan.
2. **A-Panel.** These always go on the Mini, and although it's not an MOT failure, unless there are sharp edges, they really make the car look neglected. Replacement can also be a real pain, as the doors usually need to be removed. Check door-frame where hinges attach to car – open the door a little, hold the door handle and try moving the door up and down. Any significant movement could be worn hinges or the door frame itself could be rotten

3. **Lower Doors.** The outsides are easy to bodge up, but have a really good check on the inside as well. Whilst you're down in this area, it's also a good idea to check the sills (inside the car, and outside). With the door open, check right up the A-panel along the sills, then also on the inside. Check right at the top of the wheel arch where it goes up to the dash board panel. Lift the carpet off the floor of the drivers and passenger's sides and again check for corrosion. If the carpet underlay is damp, it's a sure sign that there is a problem (usually at the top of the wheel arches inside the car)



4. **Rear Wheel Arch (Inner and Outer).** In front of and at the back of (5). These areas are always prone to corrosion. You can also check inside the rear door bins at the sides of the rear seats. Any dampness or rust in here is a sure sign of perforated inner wheel arches.
5. **Rear Lower Valence.** These are especially vulnerable at the extremities. Also check in the boot for holes that go through into these areas. Whilst you're in there, also check the battery box, and the spare wheel well.
6. **Front wing.** Especially where the Wing panel meets the Front panel. The seams are especially prone to corrosion, as is the area around the headlight rims. The headlamp rim itself often rusts but is cheap and easy to replace.
7. **Lower Screen Corners.** Again, another high problem place on Minis.



8. **Rear Window Apertures** (lower). Rear windows have a habit of sagging and catch here, causing paint damage and corrosion.
9. **Bonnet Moulding Support.** Checks here should also include the bonnet catch. It's one of the first places that ever goes on a mini, as it catches all the water, salt and loose stones. Ok, bonnets are cheap, but it's all the associated work that also has to be done like spraying to match and fitting.
10. **Windscreen Surround.** These are a bit of a mystery to most people as to why the Mini should suffer from corrosion here. The reason is that the windscreen rubber has to join somewhere and the joint is usually placed here in the centre. As the rubber dries out and shrinks, the joint opens and allows moisture in causing the panel to start to corrode. If caught early enough it can be remedied easily, but leave it too long and the whole panel will need to be replaced.
11. **Inside the boot.** [Not on diagram] Check under spare wheel and in the bottom of the battery box for leaks and rust/acid corrosion. Also check the top shock-absorber mount for corrosion. This can only be checked on the right-hand side, due to the presence of the fuel tank. If the side you can see is in need of attention, it's fair to assume that the other side that you can't see is too! Whilst you're in the boot, is the spare wheel ok?
12. **Rear Bins.** [Not on diagram] Check the rear storage bins 'Champagne Holders'. Lift out the card bottom and check for corrosion in the base of them

General notes on bodywork

Be wary of fresh underseal - it can hide lots of horrors.

Look REALLY closely at the quality of the paint finish. Just because it's shiny doesn't mean it's a good spray job. The quality of the finish comes from the preparation work so look for swirls and scratches that have been painted over. A Mini that's been re-sprayed isn't necessarily a bad purchase, so long as it's been re-sprayed well.

Check if the paint colour is a standard Rover colour. If it's not, you may have a hard time matching it if you ever need to have any repair work done.

A good idea is to use the small magnet with its face covered in a thin layer of felt (so as not to scratch the paintwork) to check for over zealous use of filler



3 Mechanical

- Check that the engine is cold before you start examining it. If it's already warm, it could be that the owner has a guilty conscience about the car not starting well from cold, or being smoky when first started.
- Listen for abnormal noises when the engine is started from cold.
- Check for excessive visible exhaust emissions. White water vapour from the exhaust is normal, blue smoke is not - that's oil burning.
- Cars sold since 1992 have been fitted with a catalytic converter to reduce exhaust emissions. A failed catalytic converter will generally not be apparent from a visual check of the exhaust emissions. A recent emissions test, either alone or as part of an MOT, will confirm that emissions are within the stringent limits applied to modern cars.
- The oil warning light (orange) should go out as soon as the engine starts. Likewise the charge indicator light (red).
- Sludge or yoghurt on the underside of the oil filler cap could indicate poor servicing or worse, a blown head gasket. Likewise any mayonnaise on the bottom of the dipstick should be treated with extreme caution.
- Check the oil level - too low shows neglect; too high could be an indication that the engine is using too much oil and has been over-filled. The oil colour should be representative of when the car was last serviced. If it's done 10,000 miles since the last oil change expect it to be quite black. Of course, a diligent owner would make sure his oil gets changed at least every 10,000 miles.
- With the engine running and the gearbox in neutral, depress the clutch - a noise could indicate that the release bearing is worn and likely to fail. If a clutch bites more than halfway up, it may need replacing.
- Jack up the front of the car using a trolley jack on the front tie bar brackets. Now check the Front Sub frame Rear mounts. They should not be hanging off or have separated at all.
- With the car still jacked up, grasp the front wheel at 12 and 6 o'clock and check for wheel bearing play by firmly rocking the wheel backwards and forwards. If the car is only supported on the jack (i.e. not on an axle stand) be careful when you do this; don't be too rough with it, and make sure it's jacked securely on firm ground. If play in the wheel is found, get the owner to put his foot on the brakes and try again. If movement is still felt, it's likely that the upper and/or lower ball joints need adjustment or even replacing. This is not an expensive job, just a very awkward one.
- Front tie rods are favourite jacking point for lazy mechanics. Check they are not bent.



- With the car still jacked up, grasp the wheels at 9 and 3 O'clock and rock it from side to side (steering lock on). If excessive play is found, it is a pretty good indication that the steering rack is defective. Again, this is not an expensive job, but a very awkward one for the novice mechanic.
- Finally, with the car still jacked up, check for weeping shock absorbers. Standard ones are quite cheap, but up rated or adjustable ones are more expensive.
- Lower the front of the car and jack up the rear of the car, jacking it up on the rear sub frame ideally with a block of wood to spread the load. Again, check the wheel bearings for excessive play.
- Check tyre-wear. Bad wheel alignment, twisted shell or bent sub-frame will show as uneven tyre wear.
- Have a look at the grease nipples on suspension arms/ball joints. Have they been greased recently or is there 10 years worth of mud, dust and gunk on there? These are signs of a careless owner.
- Ask the owner to take the car for a short drive and follow him. Look for "CRABBING" (where the car appears to be sitting further out to one side than the front). Also look to see if the car appears to sit evenly. Lopsided suspension is usually worn knuckle joints (not worn shocks as many people think). The parts to repair it are cheap, but it can be a fiddly job.
- Whilst following the car, keep a good eye out for excessive smoke from the exhaust when the driver puts his foot down (under load).
- Now ask to take the car for a test drive yourself. Check the car for crisp gear changes both up and down the gears (Baulk rings and Synchro). Does the car pull smoothly?
- Listen out for noises whilst driving. It's sometimes useful to open the window when driving around residential estates as it can be easier to hear knocking sounds etc. clonks when driving straight could be worn ball joints or loose/worn shocks. Easy and cheap to fix, but still an MOT failure, and a good bargaining point. Drive the car slowly at full lock. Any knocking or mechanical rubbing noise is likely to be a worn CV joint
- Brake bits are cheap and relatively easy to fix, but it's still important to check that the brakes on the car are in good condition. The car should pull up straight, even on older cars with drum brakes all round, without too much pedal travel. If the pedal vibrates when braking firmly, it's most likely a case of warped disks.
- The hand brake should come up about 4 clicks if adjusted correctly. Most will come up much further! Pull the handbrake on then try pushing the car. If it moves, the rear brake shoes could be worn or contaminated, or at the least they're badly adjusted.
- Is the CAT included in the price of the car. It's a standard modification on Mini's manufactured after 1990 up to 1993 to remove it. It gets very expensive to buy a new one just for an MOT if its also been removed from a post 1993 model.



4 Interior

- Don't be put off by dirty seats and grubby carpets. These can all be cleaned. However stains on fabric head-linings are impossible to remove completely.
- Check under the rear seat for signs of mildew or rust, caused by previous leaky rear windows.
- Head linings are difficult and expensive to replace, so make sure that it's in good condition with no tears or rucking around the rear window or windscreen. This would suggest that they have been incorrectly fitted. Any damp stains would suggest a leaky roof, which is pretty nasty to fix.
- Check for damage underneath any fitted seat covers - seats can be expensive to replace.
- If the vehicle is fitted with airbags (later Mini's only) check that the warning light comes on with the ignition, and goes off after a short period.
- Make sure all the gauges are in good working order and reading correctly. Speedo's, especially on modified Mini's, have a tendency to be vague at the very least. Also check that the back lights on gauges work correctly, and come on when the sidelights are turned on. Electrical gremlins are common on Minis and are usually relatively simple to fix most being down to the fuse-box, or poor earth's. However, they're a great bargaining point if you decide to make an offer for the vehicle.



5 Security

- Does it have any? Remember, it's a Mini, and security is pretty poor on them, and the car is fast becoming very desirable. Make sure any security measures that are fitted actually work, and that the previous owner hands over all duplicate keys that have been cut. If the car has a remote controlled alarm, make sure it has at least one spare control fob. These can be pretty expensive to replace if lost. If the alarm is Thatcham approved, make sure the certificate to prove it is available. Without a valid certificate (they have to be checked and re certified annually), your insurance company won't give you the discount you deserve.
- Check the locks for damage or for differences between locks, these suggest that they may have been replaced.
- Check the locks for excessive wear. Mini locks can and do wear out, which can ultimately mean they have to be replaced.
- If the windows (and/or lights) have been security etched, make sure they all match. It's common for them not to, as a result of broken windows or rusty doors being replaced with scrap-yard items.



6 Documentation and Paperwork

- Used cars sold by dealers sometimes come with some form of mechanical breakdown warranty (http://www.theaa.com/allaboutcars/warranty/warranty_home.jsp), which you will probably have to pay extra for. This does not cover everything - in the main, major mechanical and electrical items are covered for a specified period. 'Service items, fair wear and tear, and service abuse' are usually exempted. In other words, routine maintenance, parts that wear out naturally, (brake pads, tyres etc), and failures brought on by abuse or neglect. It is vital to find out exactly what is and isn't covered, for how long and for how much, and compare with another Warranty cover for both price and coverage. If it isn't being sold with a warranty, you may well still be able to purchase one independently.
- Does the seller have a current MOT certificate and certificate of insurance? If the car is three years old or more there should be a continuous series of annual MOT certificates as well. Does the mileage on these agree with the service records, and does it increase at a consistent rate year on year?
- Insist on seeing the V5 vehicle registration document, and check the name of the present keeper. Is the seller the registered keeper? If not, why are they selling it for someone else? (The registration document shows the registered keeper and NOT the legal owner).
- Check that the V5 vehicle registration document has a watermark.
- Check that the car's VIN (Vehicle Identification Number), engine number and colour match the car you're buying and the information recorded on the V5 vehicle registration document.
- Check the VIN plate (stamped onto the body in the engine compartment) for signs of tampering. Remember, if it's a modified engine, this is likely to be missing.
- Check the service records if there are any. Do the dates and mileage agree with the current mileage?
- Unfortunately, many vehicles nowadays have a 'history' which is difficult to investigate, which can include outstanding loans, theft and insurance claims, so it's worth investing in a HPI Check <<http://www.theaa.com/allaboutcars/cardatacheck/index.jsp?page=home>> to assure the car's history.
- Check all areas of glass for signs of deliberate scratching. These could indicate attempted removal of security etching
- Does the radio have a security code? If so, make sure the owner makes a note of it for you in case you ever need to disconnect the car battery. Often, it can be more expensive to decode a radio than it is to replace it.



7 Buying the Car

**If everything looks right,
If everything works right,
If it drives right,
If it feels right
And
You like the colour....**

It's probably just the right car for you.

Time to try and bag yourself a bargain!!

Here are some useful tips.

- Don't be afraid to bargain. Most sellers expect you to haggle and will have intentionally marked the price up a little so they can appear to be striking a compromise with you. Most buyers find haggling embarrassing, but it may save you a decent sum of money so try not to be shy!
- Don't be pressured into buying. It's your money, and it's up to you whether you part with it or not.
- Don't be afraid to tell the seller what you think is wrong with the car. If you can say, "you're asking £4000, the car needs work totalling £500, so I'm willing to offer you £3500", both you and the seller know exactly where you stand and have a good base on which to negotiate.
- Don't hand over any money until satisfactory arrangements for collecting or taking delivery of the car have been made. Check for everything included in the price, especially any work that the seller agreed to carry out.
- Walk away if you're not completely happy. If you like the car but aren't happy with the price you can always call the seller back later to see if he'll reconsider your offer.



8 Car Checklist

The following checklist can be used as a quick reference when viewing a car.

<u>Inspection Area</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Bodywork	
Rippled panels	
Mismatched colours	
Signs of small repairs	
Over spray	
Dents	
Rust	
Bumpers	
Grille	
Fuel filler cap	
Door handles and locks	
Condition of lights	
Glass	
Windscreen & Wipers Condition	
Side windows	
Rear window	
Security etching	
Wheels and tyres (including spare)	
Damaged rims ?	
Missing or damaged trims ?	
Good Tread depth and no wall damage?	
Bearing / Ball Joint Play?	
Interior checks (including boot/load areas)	
Headlining	
Seats (wear/burns/stains)	
Carpets (wear/burns/stains)	
Steering wheel	
Switches and column stalks	
Instruments	
ICE (In Car Entertainment)	
Door panel trim, handles and locks	
Interior lights and switches	
Seat belts' action and condition	



Under the bonnet	
Fluid Levels (Brake, Washer, Oil, Coolant)	
Signs of rust/leakage on coolant pipes	
Does the wiring look tidy and original?	
Are there any signs of dodgy DIY repairs/fittings?	
Bonnet release, stay and catch	
Static and road test	
Cold start (No smoke)	
Unusual engine noises (severe tappet / timing chain noise)	
Oil light	
Ignition light	
Airbag light	
Clutch Operation	
Gear Operation (Synchro)	
Transmission Noises	
Exhaust noises	
Acceleration (Smoking under load)	
Deceleration (Back Popping)	
Steering play and sharpness	
Suspension noises	
Vehicle brakes in a straight line	
Paperwork	
Seller's name and address	
VIN number (documents and numbers on car match)	
Registration number (front, back and V5 match)	
MOT certificate(s)	

9 Contracts

In order to make the sale official and avoid any problems later, it's good to have a contract between the buyer and seller. This needn't be a big deal, just a simple bill of sale with date, price and the signature of each party. The templates on the next 2 pages should serve most purposes.



Buyers Contract

Vehicle details

Make:

Model:

Registration No:

Indicated Mileage:

Registration Document completed by buyer/seller Yes/No

Registration Document (V5) exchanged Yes/No

Additional Notes/Comments:

.....
.....

The undersigned purchaser acknowledges receipt of the above vehicle in exchange for the cash sum of £..... being the price agreed by the purchaser with the vendor for the above named vehicle, receipt of which the vendor hereby acknowledges.

Buyer:

Seller:

Date:



Sellers Contract

Vehicle details

Make:

Model:

Registration No:

Indicated Mileage:

Registration Document completed by buyer/seller Yes/No

Registration Document (V5) exchanged Yes/No

Additional Notes/Comments:

.....
.....
The undersigned purchaser acknowledges receipt of the above vehicle in exchange for the cash sum of £..... being the price agreed by the purchaser with the vendor for the above named vehicle, receipt of which the vendor hereby acknowledges. It is understood the vehicle is sold as seen, tried and approved by the purchaser without any representations, warranties or conditions express or implied whatsoever.

Buyer:

Seller:

Date:



10 Credits

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11 Disclaimer

Whilst every effort and care has been taken to ensure that this document will give you the chance to make an informed assessment of your prospective purchase, we cannot and will not be held responsible for any of the purchases you make. One of the best pieces of advice we can make to anyone who wishes to purchase a second hand car, is to request the assistance of a fully qualified Mechanic, in this particular case, one who is fully familiar with The Mini.

Good luck with your Mini hunting.

And Finally.

Now you’ve hopefully found your Mini, the one thing you’re going to need is helpful bits of advice.

This is where www.minifinity.com comes in very handy.

Minifinity is a dedicated group of people who seriously love Classic Minis. Be it from the Mk.1 right the way through to the very last car that rolled off the production line. This also includes its variants such as the Clubman, Marcos, Elf’s, Hornets and VTEC conversions. They regularly meet on-line and frequently meet up at shows.

On the Minifinity site you will find Pictorial Histories, Screen Savers, Wallpapers, DIY Tips, Club Listings, Show Calendars, Show Reports and of course the ubiquitous Forum. Its possible to post your technical questions and have them answered by people who have travelled the road you are now setting out upon.

The Minifinity community, pride themselves at being more useful than a Haynes Manual, and more fun then a Monty Python sketch.

Give them a go..... You never know, you might just like them

If you have any comments on this document or suggestions for improvement, please visit www.minifinity.com and post a message on the forum. We’d love to hear your feedback! Any contributions will be given full credit if used.