



## The Ultimate Classic Corvette Buyers Check List

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When you want to buy a classic car, there are a lot of things to look at and inspect, in this article I will deal with one specific car, the Chevrolet Corvette, you look at a lot of the same things as every other car, but the Corvette does have its own special areas of interest.

**Check The Numbers:** First just a quick visual inspection, do they look UN-tampered with, do they look like they were stamped at the factory.

These are the numbers to look at, if you're looking at it as an investment, this is one of the most important things you need to look at..

**Body ID Engine Number:** Casting Number, RPO Codes, Date Codes, and other various stampings. Trim Tag: Vin Code, Paint Code, Transmission Code. Owners Title: Make sure it all matches with the title.

### **Body Work:**

Make sure that the body in general looks square, if it doesn't this indicates a wreck, or worn body mounts, or possibly frame damage in the area that isn't square.

Check the nose alignment, this is another indicator that the car has been in a front end collision.

### **Wheel Well Height:**

Check the height of the wheels at all four corners of the car, if they look different, this indicates a suspension problem, it may be simple like a shock, or extensive like a broken spring, so take your time and pay attention.

### **Body Surface:**

What you're checking for here is anything that looks like it doesn't belong, like bumps, ripples, waves, visible seams, and last but not least, paint shrinkage, most of these mean a repaint.

**Paint Work:**

Check against the paint code to see if the car has the factory paint color on it, look for over spray on any areas of the body, certain years did have a bit of engine over spray from the factory, just a bit on the headers of the car.

Paint surface problems, this includes lifting, checking if the car has a lacquer type paint on it, look for over masking, this will indicate that the car has been repainted at some point in time, you should also look for dust in the paint.

Look for scratches showing through the paint, you'll never see this with a factory paint job, look for bubbles, flaking, peeling, all of these things indicate that the car has been repainted at some point in time, and not a good job done with the paint

**Color Match:** Look for areas that look like the color is a bit off, or doesn't match the rest of the car, this always means body work in the area where the paint doesn't match, and usually means that the car has had an accident.

**Check Panel Gaps, And Bumper Height:**

Check the front bumper to make sure that it sets level, and the height that it should, check the gaps around the hood, doors, T-top, deck lid, and last but not least the rear bumper.

**Steel Work:**

A common misconception about the Corvette is the one where it has nothing that can rust, because the car is made from fiber glass, this is 100% not true, there is a lot of steel in a Corvette.

Check the frame of the car for undercoat peeling, or falling off of the car, look at the frame for surface rust, flaking rust. Patch repairs, and holes, check around the windshield posts, this is one of the areas where they wrap fiber glass around the metal.

**Under Hood And Engine:**

First of all you'll want to check the painted surface of the engine for condition of the paint, and also take a look at the chrome surfaces of the engine, look for peeling, and rust showing through the chrome.

**Check For Originality:**

If you are a car collector who buys these cars for investment reasons, this could be the most important parts of the process, basically you're looking for things that may look out of place, or don't look as if the factory installed them.

This usually is not too hard to determine, you'll be looking at the exhaust system, the fuel system including but not limited to the carburetor, the fuel pump, the intake manifold, the air cleaner, next is the wiring, you'll be looking at the general condition of the harness, and the wiring

ends.

### **Maintenance:**

You should look at heater hose connections, and hose condition, also look at all of the drive belts on the car, after that you'll move on to a maintenance check, this will include coolant level, engine oil level, hydraulic fluid level, brake fluid level, transmission fluid level, and last but not least power steering fluid level.

### **Check Engine Condition:**

This is a very important step, especially if you need to save money while restoring the car, have the owner start the car for you, check the engine at the tail pipe for smoke when the engine is revved, also look at the inside of the oil filler cap for sludge, an indicator of poor engine maintenance.

Also if you see smoke when the engine is revved, and it seems to go away when the engine warms up, it needs valve seals replaced, and more then likely a valve job, examine coolant for oil in the water, this will look like a white substance floating on the water, and check radiator for leaks.

### **Check Engine For Leaks:**

Leaks from the engine are important because they can mean that the engine needs to be removed from the car to fix them, at which point it's always better to just rebuild the engine to make sure that everything is up to par.

When checking for leaks you need to concentrate on a few areas of the engine to be through with your inspection of the engine, to start with always check the bottom radiator hose for leaks, and then check around the distributor, valve covers, the rear of the intake manifold, and the bell housing.

You should also look under the car to see where it has been dripping oil on the ground, and while your there look the the back of the engine where the transmission connects to the engine for oil leaks, this usually indicate a rear main seal leak, and is a lot of work to fix.

### **Interior Check:**

This is a big area to check, so I will try to narrow it down as much as I possibly can, first of all your should check the carpet for wear, such as rips, tears, and fraying, check for dryness, or wet areas, this usually indicate a leak, such as a heater core.

Check the condition of the center console for cracks, breaks, and repair work in the past, look at both door panels for ripping, and tearing, if you find any, you know that you'll be replacing them, look at the dash panel, it's made out of plastic, so it can crack, fade, or just deteriorate over time.

Also look at the door seals, all the rubber around the doors, and top of the car, also check the seat

belts for wear, or abuse, check both door latches for proper latching, you should always have two clicks before the door is all the way latched.

Check the steering wheel for wear, and if it's a tilt, or telescoping wheel check to make sure that both of those options are working correctly, check your convertible tops for alignment, or digging in to the car body, always check the seals around the tops.

Check all compartment doors, hinges, and latches to make sure that they are working correctly, inspect the windshield for leaks, and fiber glass bubbles, bubble here indicate rust around the windshield area of the car.

### **Road Test The Car:**

Unless that car doesn't run, you should always road test it, start the car and turn on the windshield wipers, keep in mind that special versions of the Corvette didn't have wipers, we're talking about the L88, ZL1, and cars like these that were race cars that were put on the street.

Inspect windshield washers to make sure that they work, check all of the lights in the instrument panels, turn on the head lights and make sure that they are working properly, check the dimmer, and the interior lights, also do a walk around and look at the exterior lights.

### **Check The Gauges:**

Make sure that you check all of the gauges to make sure that they are working correctly, and registering properly what they should, that about covers the interior check on the car, now we'll move on to a mechanical check.

### **Mechanical Check:**

You should check all of these things first with the car in one place, and then again while the car is moving.

Does the park brake hold the car in place on an incline, does the manual transmission pop out of gear, this indicates bad synchronous gears, and is a transmission rebuild, make sure that the transmission shifts smoothly, a transmission that is hard to get in to a gear usually has bad synchros also.

Test that clutch sitting on an incline to see if it slips, this means that you need a new clutch, pressure plate, and usually a throw out bearing, if the car has an automatic transmission, make sure that it shifts smoothly between gears.

Also make sure that your automatic transmission shifts down quickly, and smoothly, listen to the car for clunks, thumps, clicks, and the like, check the A/C if the car had it, make sure that the speedometer is working right.

### **Braking:**

Make sure that the car doesn't pull to one side, this indicates that you have a brake caliper binding when you step on the brake, also listen for squealing, this indicates that your brake pads are getting low, or you have something caught between the rotor, and the brake pad.

If the brake pedal feels to hard, it's an indicator that your vacuum booster is on the way out, or has gone all the way out, with the car parked put your foot on the brake, if it sinks slowly to the floor, this indicates that your master cylinder needs to be replaced, or your slave cylinders.

### **At Normal Driving Speeds:**

Listen for excessive wind noise in the passenger are of the car, this means that it's time to replace the rubber seals in the car, feel for vibrations in the car, these can mean a lot of different things, from bad wheel balancing, to drive line balancing.

Does the steering wheel return to center after a turn, it should do this, if not you could have a steering gear box on the way out, fell also for the steering wheel to shimmy, this indicates suspension problems, could be as simple as bad shocks, but could be much worse, so consider it not a good thing.

That's about it for this article, i know it's a huge article, and it has a lot of information, but I thought that it was about time that I did this article in it's full glory, but have still ended up condensing it down, but I did get most everything that I could think of.

### **About the Author:**

Over my life in the automotive industry I have learned that I love the classic American cars, and in such have dedicated a lot of time to helping people restore their classic cars.