Pre-Trip Inspection Checklist for Fleet

A practical checklist to help drivers identify visible damage, safety defects and mechanical issues before operation.

How to use this guide

For each item, mark OK, Defect or N/A. The Photo / video column indicates whether visual evidence can help document the check. Photos and digital tools support the physical inspection; they do not replace it.

Evidence key

Yes – condition can be documented visually
Partly – a photo helps, but cannot confirm the full check
Hands-on – physical inspection or operation is required

The five-step routine

1. Review the previous report – Note unresolved issues.
2. Walk around the vehicle – Check body panels, glass, lights, tires and load.
3. Check safety systems – Inspect tires, brakes, steering, lights, fluids and cab controls.
4. Record any defect – Note location and severity; attach a photo where useful.
5. Decide if road-ready – Clear, restrict or remove the vehicle under company procedures.

Vehicle information

Vehicle / unit no.		Registration / plate		Vehicle type	
Driver name		Date / time		Odometer	
Inspection location		Previous report reviewed?	■ Yes ■ No		

1. Exterior & Body

Check item	Photo / video	OK	Defect	N/A
Body panels free from new visible damage	Yes	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Windshield free from significant cracks	Yes	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Mirrors clean and secure	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Number / license plate visible	Yes	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Doors and locks operate correctly	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Vehicle safety checks

Complete each check before the vehicle leaves. Use the defect log on page 4 to record anything that needs follow-up.

2. Tires & Wheels

Check item	Photo / video	OK	Defect	N/A
Tire condition	Yes	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Tire pressure	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Tread condition	Yes	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Cuts or bulges	Yes	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Wheel / rim condition	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Lug nuts (where applicable)	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Visible leaks	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Inspect every tire, including the spare where fitted. Uneven wear, cuts, bulges and low pressure can indicate a safety issue.

3. Lights & Signals

Check item	Photo / video	OK	Defect	N/A
Headlights	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Brake lights	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Tail lights	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Turn signals	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Hazard lights	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Reverse lights	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Marker / clearance lights (where applicable)	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Test lights with the ignition on, using a second person or a reflective surface. Check lenses for cracks and moisture as well as bulb operation.

4. Brakes & Steering

Check item	Photo / video	OK	Defect	N/A
Service brake pedal	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Parking brake	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Brake warning indicators	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Steering response	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Visible brake-system damage or leaks	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

A photo cannot show how a brake feels. Check pedal feel, parking brake hold and steering response. Treat an active brake warning as a defect.

5. Engine & Fluids

Check item	Photo / video	OK	Defect	N/A
Engine oil	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Coolant	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Brake fluid (where applicable)	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Washer fluid	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Power steering fluid (where applicable)	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Visible fluid leaks	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Belts and hoses	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Battery	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Check levels on level ground, following the manufacturer's guidance for your vehicle. Look underneath for fresh drips or stains.

Cab, cargo & defect response

Finish the inspection inside the vehicle and check that any load is secure before moving.

6. Interior & Controls

Check item	Photo / video	OK	Defect	N/A
Seat belt	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Horn	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Dashboard warning lights	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Gauges	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Wipers	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Washer system	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Defroster	Hands-on	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Mirrors adjusted	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Emergency equipment present	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Start the vehicle and watch the dashboard. A warning light that stays on is a defect until the cause is known.

7. Cargo / Load

Check item	Photo / video	OK	Defect	N/A
Cargo properly secured	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Doors / tailgate secure	Yes	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Tie-downs in good condition	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Load distributed appropriately	Partly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
No loose objects	Yes	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Check the load before you move, not after. A shifting or unsecured load affects braking and stability and can damage the vehicle.

8. What to do when you find a defect

Stop, record the defect and its location, assess its seriousness, attach a photo where useful, and report it to the person named in your escalation process. Do not operate the vehicle until it is cleared under your organisation's procedures. The severity scale below is a common company-level approach, not a regulatory classification.

Severity	Example	Typical action
Minor	Small scuff, dim interior light	Log it and schedule the repair
Major	Slow tire leak, cracked mirror	Report now; repair before the next trip if possible
Safety critical	Brake warning active, bulging tire	Do not operate; escalate immediately

Defect record & sign-off

Record defects identified during the inspection and document the follow-up decision.

9. Defect log

#	Defect found	Location	Severity	Photo attached	Reported to	Cleared
1				Yes / No		Yes / No
2				Yes / No		Yes / No
3				Yes / No		Yes / No
4				Yes / No		Yes / No

10. Inspection clearance

Vehicle condition [ ] Cleared for operation [ ] Restricted use [ ] Remove from service

Driver name		Signature		Date

Inspection, DVIR and periodic inspection: what's the difference?

Concept	What it is
Pre-trip inspection	The driver checks the vehicle before operating it. This checklist supports that process.
DVIR	A report documenting defects or deficiencies, with repairs certified before the vehicle returns to service.
Periodic inspection	A separate inspection, required at least once every 12 months for applicable commercial vehicles.

For US fleets, under 49 CFR §396.13, drivers must be satisfied the vehicle is in safe operating condition before driving and review the previous DVIR where required. Requirements vary by vehicle type and jurisdiction.

Important: General fleet-management checklist only. Adapt it to your vehicle types, manufacturer guidance, company procedures and applicable regulations. It is not a legal form.

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