Inspection Checklist

Used Skid Steers & Compact Track Loaders

75+ inspection checkpoints across 9 critical sections.
Expert tips with Canadian repair cost estimates.
Print this checklist and bring it to every inspection.

Works for auction lots, private sales, and dealer purchases.

MACHINE DETAILS

Make / Model:		Year:	
Serial Number:		Hours:	
Location:		Asking Price:	
Seller:		Date:	

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Each item has 3 checkboxes: PASS | CONCERN | FAIL

PASS = Component is in acceptable condition for the machine's age and hours.
CONCERN = Potential issue found. Factor repair cost into your offer price.
FAIL = Serious defect. Walk away or negotiate a major price reduction.

Expert tips (in italics) tell you what to look for and what repairs cost in Canada.
Use the scoring table on the last page to calculate an overall condition grade.

SECTION 1: ENGINE & POWERTRAIN

- [ ] [ ] [ ] Cold start: engine fires within 3-5 seconds, no excessive cranking
  Slow cranking = weak battery or starter. Hard start when cold = glow plug or injection issue. $500-2,000
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Idle: smooth, steady RPM, no hunting or surging
  Rough idle = injector, fuel system, or compression issue. Injector replacement = $300-800 per cylinder
- [ ] [ ] [ ] No excessive exhaust smoke after warmup (blue = oil, white = coolant, black = fuel)
  Blue smoke = worn rings or valve seals ($3,000-8,000). White smoke = head gasket ($2,000-5,000)
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Oil level and condition: amber/brown, no metal flakes, no milky appearance
  Milky oil = coolant contamination (head gasket). Metal flakes = internal wear. Both are expensive
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Coolant: proper level, no oil contamination, no rust
  Oil in coolant = head gasket. Rust = neglected maintenance. Coolant flush = $200-400
- [ ] [ ] [ ] No visible oil, coolant, or fuel leaks around engine
  Fresh leaks vs old seepage. Active drips = current problem. Valve cover gaskets = $200-500
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Air filter: clean or recently replaced, housing sealed
  Dirty filter = neglected maintenance. Damaged housing = dust ingestion risk. Filter = $30-80
- [ ] [ ] [ ] DPF/DEF system: no active fault codes, no warning lights
  Tier 4 emissions repairs are expensive. DPF replacement = $3,000-6,000. DEF system = $1,000-3,000
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Belts and hoses: no cracks, bulges, or glazing
  Hose failure can cause overheating and strand you on the job. Belt replacement = $50-200
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Turbo: no excessive whine, shaft play, or oil leaks at connections
  Turbo replacement = $1,500-4,000. Listen for high-pitched whine or grinding at full RPM

SECTION 2: HYDRAULIC SYSTEM

- [ ] [ ] [ ] Boom drift test: raise boom, shut engine off, hold for 60 seconds
  More than 2 inches of drift = cylinder seal leak or valve issue. Cylinder reseal = $500-1,500
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Bucket/attachment curl: smooth, full range of motion, holds position
  Jerky movement = air in system or worn valve. Slow curl = pump wear. Valve rebuild = $800-2,500
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Hydraulic fluid: check level, color (should be clear amber), no foam
  Dark/black fluid = overheated or neglected. Milky = water contamination. Full flush = $300-600
- [ ] [ ] [ ] No leaks at cylinder seals, hose fittings, or quick-connect couplers
  Weeping seals are minor. Active drips need repair. Hose replacement = $100-400 per hose
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Auxiliary hydraulics: flow and pressure correct for rated specs
  Low flow = pump wear. Test with a known-good attachment. Pump rebuild = $2,000-5,000
- [ ] [ ] [ ] Hydraulic pump: no whining, grinding, or cavitation noise at full RPM
  Pump whine at load = worn pump. Expect $2,000-5,000 for pump replacement on most models
- [ ] [ ] [ ] All coupler faces clean, no scoring or damage to flat face couplers
  Damaged coupler faces leak under pressure. Replacement = $100-300 per coupler

SECTION 3: UNDERCARRIAGE (CTL) / TIRES (SSL)

☐☐☐ Track tension: 15-30mm sag when measured mid-span

Too loose = accelerated wear. Too tight = stress on final drive. Adjustment is free but indicates maintenance habits

☐☐☐ Track tread depth: measure lugs, compare to new spec

Below 50% = plan for replacement. Full track set = $3,500-5,500 for most CTLs

☐☐☐ Sprocket teeth: no hooking, shark-finning, or broken teeth

Worn sprockets chew through new tracks fast. Sprocket set = $800-1,500

☐☐☐ Rollers and idlers: spin freely, no flat spots, no oil leaks

Leaking rollers = failed seals. Replacement = $200-500 per roller. Full set adds up fast

☐☐☐ Track frame: no bends, cracks, or signs of impact damage

Bent track frame = major impact history. Very expensive to repair. Possible walk-away

☐☐☐ WHEELED: tire tread depth over 50%, no sidewall damage

Skid steer tires = $300-800 each. All four should match. Mismatched = handling issues

☐☐☐ WHEELED: all four tires match size and brand

Mismatched tires cause uneven wear and tracking problems. Full set = $1,200-3,200

SECTION 4: STRUCTURAL / FRAME

☐☐☐ Frame: no cracks at weld points, loader arm pivots, or ROPS mounts

Cracks at welds = fatigue or overloading. Professional weld repair = $500-2,000. ROPS cracks = walk away

☐☐☐ Lift arm pins and bushings: minimal play, no excessive slop

Wiggle the boom side to side. More than 1/4 inch = worn pins/bushings. Repair = $500-1,500

☐☐☐ Bucket/coupler pins: acceptable wear, retainers in place

Missing retainers = safety hazard. Worn pins = attachment drops. Pin kit = $200-500

☐☐☐ No evidence of major collision or rollover

Check for kinked ROPS, bent frame rails, misaligned cab. Any rollover evidence = walk away

☐☐☐ Body panels: check for Bondo or body filler with a magnet

Magnet won't stick to Bondo. Filler hides collision damage. Run magnet across all panels

☐☐☐ Loader arms: straight, no bowing or twisting

Bent arms = overloading history. Look down the arm from behind. Any bow = structural stress

SECTION 5: CAB & OPERATOR STATION

- ☐☐☐ Seat: no tears, rips, or broken adjustment mechanisms
  Seat replacement = $300-800. Suspension seat upgrade = $500-1,200
- ☐☐☐ Seatbelt: functional, retracts properly, no fraying
  Non-functional seatbelt = safety hazard and job site violation. Replacement = $50-150
- ☐☐☐ Glass/windows: no cracks, chips, or broken seals
  Cracked front glass = $300-800 to replace. Door glass = $200-500. Check all panels
- ☐☐☐ HVAC: heat blows hot, A/C blows cold (if equipped)
  No heat = heater core or coolant flow issue. No A/C = recharge ($200) or compressor ($1,000-2,000)
- ☐☐☐ Joystick controls: smooth, no dead zones, return to center
  Sticky or loose joysticks = worn internals. Replacement = $400-1,200 per joystick
- ☐☐☐ All switches and controls operational (lights, aux, 2-speed, horn)
  Test EVERY switch. Non-working = electrical issue or disconnected safety switch
- ☐☐☐ No musty smell or water stains (flood/water damage)
  Water damage destroys electronics. Musty cab + corroded connectors = walk away
- ☐☐☐ Hour meter matches documented service history
  Discrepancy = possible rollback. Cross-reference service records with hours on invoices

SECTION 6: ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

- ☐☐☐ Battery: clean terminals, no corrosion, holds charge
  Heavy corrosion = charging system issue. Battery replacement = $150-400
- ☐☐☐ All exterior lights functional (head, tail, work, strobes)
  Non-working lights = bulbs, wiring, or ground issue. Check for melted connectors
- ☐☐☐ Wiring harness: no exposed wires, rodent damage, or repairs
  Mouse-chewed wires are common on farm/stored machines. Creates intermittent electrical issues
- ☐☐☐ Alternator charging properly (13.5-14.5V running)
  Under 13V = alternator failing. Over 15V = regulator issue. Alternator = $300-700
- ☐☐☐ Backup alarm and/or camera functional
  Required on most commercial job sites. Non-functional = safety violation risk

SECTION 7: DRIVE SYSTEM

- ☐☐☐ Machine tracks straight on flat ground (hands off controls)
  Pulling to one side = weak drive motor, brake drag, or track tension imbalance
- ☐☐☐ Both drive motors engage smoothly from stop
  Jerky starts = worn motor or low charge pressure. Drive motor replacement = $3,000-6,000
- ☐☐☐ No grinding, whining, or clunking from final drives
  Grinding = gear wear. Whining = bearing failure. Final drive rebuild = $4,000-6,000 per side
- ☐☐☐ 2-Speed (if equipped): shifts smoothly, holds in high range under load
  Won't shift or drops out of high = clutch pack worn. 2-speed rebuild = $1,500-3,000
- ☐☐☐ Parking brake holds machine on a slope
  Weak parking brake = worn brake disc or spring. Safety issue. Repair = $500-1,500

SECTION 8: OPERATIONAL TESTS

- ☐☐☐ Operate machine for 20+ minutes under load
  Short demos hide problems. Insist on running it yourself. Issues appear after warmup

☐☐☐ Lift rated capacity load: boom rises smoothly at full speed

Slow lift = pump wear. Hesitation = relief valve issue. Test with a known-weight load

☐☐☐ All functions simultaneous: drive + lift + curl at the same time

Bogging down under combined load = pump capacity issue. Common in high-hour machines

☐☐☐ Engine temperature stabilizes in normal range after 20 min

Overheating under load = radiator blockage, thermostat, or head gasket. Check gauge carefully

☐☐☐ No unusual smells: burning oil, hot coolant, or electrical

Hot smell after running = something is failing. Identify source before buying

☐☐☐ Machine powers through a pile of material without stalling

Stalling under load = low engine power or hydrostatic drive issues

SECTION 9: DOCUMENTATION & HISTORY

☐☐☐ Service records available and consistent with hours

No records = assume worst case maintenance. Deduct 10-15% from offer for unknown history

☐☐☐ Ownership history: number of previous owners, usage type

Single-owner, contractor-maintained machines are ideal. Rental fleet units get harder use

☐☐☐ Machine matches listing description (serial, hours, options)

Verify serial plate matches paperwork. Check for signs of tampering

☐☐☐ Clear title / ownership documentation

Verify no liens. Run a PPSA search in Canada. Buying a liened machine = you lose it

SECTION : INSPECTION SCORING SUMMARY

Section	Pass	Concern	Fail
1. Engine & Powertrain	☐	☐	☐
2. Hydraulic System	☐	☐	☐
3. Undercarriage / Tires	☐	☐	☐
4. Structural / Frame	☐	☐	☐
5. Cab & Operator Station	☐	☐	☐
6. Electrical System	☐	☐	☐
7. Drive System	☐	☐	☐
8. Operational Tests	☐	☐	☐
9. Documentation & History	☐	☐	☐

OVERALL GRADE: _____

WALK-AWAY RED FLAGS

- ✗ Frame cracks at ROPS mount points or loader arm pivots
- ✗ Evidence of rollover (kinked ROPS, bent frame, misaligned cab)
- ✗ Milky oil or coolant (head gasket failure, $3,000-8,000+ repair)
- ✗ Blue exhaust smoke after warmup (internal engine wear)
- ✗ Musty cab with corroded connectors (flood damage)
- ✗ Hour meter tampering or serial plate inconsistency
- ✗ Machine won't track straight or one side is significantly weaker
- ✗ Seller refuses to allow cold start or extended operation test

SECTION : PRICE NEGOTIATION GUIDE

Issue Found	Suggested Deduction
Tracks at 50% or less life	**Deduct $2,500 - $5,000**
No service records	**Deduct 10 - 15% from offer**
Approaching 2,000 hr major service	**Deduct $1,500 - $3,000**
Hydraulic leaks or slow operation	**Get repair quote first**
Electrical issues (lights, gauges, sensors)	**Deduct $500 - $2,000**
Cosmetic damage (dents, paint, glass)	**Deduct $300 - $1,500**
Missing or non-functional A/C	**Deduct $1,000 - $2,000**

YOUR NOTES