Car Checks

Exterior

* Put newspaper under the car roughly between driver and passenger seats
  + There should not be anything dripping (wait ~10 mins)
  + If it's not dry, that means you're likely leaking oil or transmission fluid. Black / brown thick = oil, pink/brown watery is transmission fluid.
* Take photos particularly of the wheels
  + Some dealers will swap wheels/tires after sale
* Pull out the engine dipstick
  + Check for oil color
* Penny test the tire treads
  + Lincoln’s head should disappear
* Inspect body panels, windows, etc. for marking tape marks
  + Masking tape indicates body work was done
* Check every body panel, especially the front fenders. Underneath the hood, on the fenders, there should be a sticker with the VIN number. Same with the trunk, doors, etc.
  + If they don't have a sticker, that means it has either been repainted or replaced, likely indicating it was in an accident
  + The side door VIN should be raised above the paint if it’s manufacturer original
* Make sure the car is in bright sunlight and clean. The finish of factory paint is a mirror finish. You should be able to shave in your reflection on the paint.
  + If you notice a panel is mustier, muddied, etc, that's an aftermarket paint job.
* Look at where the body panels meet each other.
  + The gap between every body panel should be pretty consistent across the entire car (about 1/8" at most). If the gap is narrower or wider, that can indicate aftermarket replacements.
* Go around the car to each corner and give a nice, firm push down on each corner. The car should bounce and rebound 2-4 times pretty quickly.
  + If it doesn't, or it's very slow on the rebound, the shocks will likely need to be replaced soon.

Interior

* Check for obvious scratches, torn fabric, etc.
* Turn on car, and listen for a smooth engine start up
  + Starting issues can indicate either battery being too weak ($50-100 fix) or the ignition system ($500).
* Open all windows in the vehicle to make sure they work
* Turn on the AC and the heat, and turn on the radio to a high volume at the same time to see if there are drops in electrical current
  + AC shouldn’t take more than 20-30 seconds to get cold

Test Drive

* Get up to speed, and continue to run/fiddle with AC, heat, radio + volume, and other electrical components
* Accelerate hard when getting on highway
  + Get all the way up to 2000+ RPM
* Hard test of the brakes