

About.com Used Cars

Used Cars

By [Keith Griffin](#), About.com Guide

AiM, which inspects new and used vehicles, has come out with a grading system to make it easier to instantly gauge what a used car is like.

The grading system is based on [AiM's used vehicle inspection report](#)¹ and [AutoCheck Score](#)² history report. Developed by AiM and used by their nearly 500 full-time inspectors, the grading system accounts for a bumper-to-bumper review for mechanical issues, cosmetic blemishes and structural damages. The information is then turned into a letter grade. Letter grades are provided on all of AiM's packages (AiM Plus, AiM Preferred and AiM Certified, which includes engine oil and transmission fluid analysis with a warranty for these parts).

I've witnessed an AiM inspection in my driveway of my 2008 Mazda5. It's a thorough, professional inspection that I highly recommend before buying any used car that does not come with a manufacturer's warranty. Heck, even if it does come with a warranty, it might still be worth the investment.

"Determining which 2010 Ford Mustang or 2009 Nissan Altima to buy is now easier for AiM customers," said Eric Widmer, vice president of sales and operations at AiM, which recently conducted its 35 millionth inspection. "Our grades clearly label the good cars from the bad. Prospective buyers can find the best used cars right down to the year, make and model from coast to coast. And, sellers are able to show an expert, third-party vehicle grade to attract potential buyers."

- "A" vehicles are in excellent condition and in great mechanical working order
- "B" vehicles are clean, run well and have minor cosmetic blemishes
- "C" vehicles have higher mileage, good mechanics and have some cosmetic blemishes
- "D" vehicles have undergone major repairs or are in need of major mechanical or major cosmetic repairs
- "F" vehicles are salvage, have flood or fire damage

The condition report consists of an AiM professional's visual, mechanical and road test evaluation. Each item on the condition report is weighted based on importance to determine the grade. Grades are clearly represented on the condition report.

Give AiM a shot. You'll be glad you did for the peace of mind of an independent professional inspecting a used car before purchase - and, no, I am in no way compensated to say that!

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