

## Buying a Secondhand Smartphone

This tutorial will tell you what to watch out for when purchasing a secondhand smartphone.



1. If you cannot check it out for yourself in person, I would generally recommend you not buy it. There are too many things that can go wrong. It might have issues the seller does not even realise. If you cannot see it, ask them questions based on this document.
2. Compare the asking price with other sources such as TradeMe or ask an expert. Is it a realistic and fair price?
3. Is the screen broken? If so I would be very reluctant to purchase the phone, particularly if the touch is glitchy or non-functional as the impact might have caused other problems that might not be immediately obvious. You could ask the seller if they are willing to let a technician examine it first. If it is a Samsung, do not purchase it. Samsung screen repairs are very expensive due to the high cost of the screens and so it is unlikely to be cost effective in the long run.
4. Examine the outside carefully. Superficial scratches are not an issue. However, if you see clear separation of the housing, I would recommend you not buy it (Figure 1). This can signify a swollen battery or impact damage. Such gaps can also make the phone more susceptible to water damage.
5. Lie it down on a flat surface, making sure anything protruding from the back (such as the lense cover) is over an edge. Rock it back and forth. It should not move. Look at it carefully to be certain it is not bent. If you see a bend or feel some play when you move it, then I would generally advise against purchase. Bent housings can stress and damage logic boards over time or cause problems when attempting to replace the screen.
6. Look for dents or burrs in the housing around where screen meets the housing (Figure 2). If you see any, ask if you can get a technician to check it out before purchase because such things can potentially cause problems if you ever need to repair the phone.
7. Thoroughly test the touch. Tap all points of the screen and make sure it is responsive. Move back and forth between home screens quickly, sweeping your finger back and forth along the full length of the screen.
8. Check and make sure all the buttons are functioning well.
9. If it has one and you would like to use it, test the fingerprint scanner.
10. Does the phone appear to have been fully reset and deregistered from all accounts (Google for Android, iCloud for Apple)? If not, ask the seller to do this. If they cannot or will not, ask them to let you do it or take it to someone who can **before payment**. A smartphone still registered to the original owner's ID will be a problem. They will see your photos and other content and vice versa, and they could also track and remotely reset the phone. Finally, if you ever need to reset the phone due to a software problem, you will be unable to get back in. Do not buy a phone in this situation under ANY circumstances.
11. Check the wifi is getting a good signal. Find a wifi source, make sure it is strong, and then walk away from it. If the signal strength dips quickly, do not purchase the phone unless they are willing to let you get a technician to check out the issue and drop the price accordingly.
12. Insert a SIM card and make a phone call. Make sure you can hear the other person clear and they can hear you. Test the external speaker. Make sure it can bring up websites OK.
13. Ask them how long the battery typically lasts. You should be able to get a day out of it without needing a recharge.



Figure 1: iPhone with Housing Separation



Figure 2: Severe Housing Damage

If the phone passes all of these tests, there is a good chance it will be a safe purchase. If in doubt, ask if you can take the phone to an expert for an assessment before purchase.