

# Pre-Start Checklist: Light Vehicle

Ute, van or car. Complete before first use each shift and on every change of operator.

TFO Software  
Australian-built fleet management  
tfosoftware.com/au | 1300 110 248

|                            |  |                          |  |               |  |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------------|--|---------------|--|
| Asset ID / unit no.        |  | Registration / plant no. |  | State of rego |  |
| Make and model             |  | Operator name            |  | Date          |  |
| Odometer (km)              |  | Hour meter (hrs)         |  | Depot / site  |  |
| Licence or competency held |  | Licence expiry           |  | Shift / time  |  |

| WALK-AROUND, ENGINE OFF  |                                                                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Tyres inflated, pressures checked                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Tread depth and condition (thresholds on the reference page)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sidewalls free of cuts, chunking, bulges, exposed cords           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Spare tyre present and serviceable; jack and wheel brace on board |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Wheel nuts present and not loose                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No fluid leaking onto the ground                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Panels secure and free of major damage (mark the diagram)         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Windscreen free of cracks in the swept area                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Number plates present, legible, unobstructed                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Tow bar and coupling secure                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Load restraint and cargo barrier fitted where required            |

| UNDER THE BONNET         |                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Engine oil level                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Coolant level                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Brake fluid level               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Windscreen washer fluid         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Battery secure, terminals clean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Belts and hoses condition       |

| LIGHTS AND REFLECTORS    |                                |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Headlights, high and low beam  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Indicators front and rear      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Brake lights                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Tail lights                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Reversing lights               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hazard lights                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Reflectors clean and undamaged |

| CABIN AND CONTROLS       |                                            |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Seat and seatbelt function and condition   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Mirrors clean, unbroken, adjusted          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Horn                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Wipers and washers                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dash warning lights extinguish after start |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Park brake holds                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Foot brake firm                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Steering free of excess play               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Reversing camera or sensors                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Air conditioning and demister              |

| DOCUMENTATION AND EQUIPMENT |                                                        |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>    | Registration current                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>    | Next service not overdue                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/>    | First aid kit complete                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/>    | Fire extinguisher present, gauge in the green, in date |
| <input type="checkbox"/>    | Emergency triangle or beacon                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/>    | Loose items stowed                                     |

|                                                                          |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|                                                                          |  |
| Mark existing damage: scratches, dents, cracks. Note panel and position. |  |

|                         |       |                 |       |                       |       |
|-------------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| Defect found this shift | Y / N | Safe to operate | Y / N | Tagged out of service | Y / N |
| Operator signature      |       | Time            |       | Supervisor notified   |       |
| Defect detail           |       |                 |       |                       |       |

By signing, I certify this machine is safe to the limits of this inspection prior to use. Keep this record for as long as your accreditation, insurer and asset life require. Maintenance contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

# Pre-Start Checklist: Heavy Vehicle

Prime mover, rigid or trailer. Complete before first use each shift and on every change of operator.

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|                            |  |                          |  |               |  |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------------|--|---------------|--|
| Asset ID / unit no.        |  | Registration / plant no. |  | State of rego |  |
| Make and model             |  | Operator name            |  | Date          |  |
| Odometer (km)              |  | Hour meter (hrs)         |  | Depot / site  |  |
| Licence or competency held |  | Licence expiry           |  | Shift / time  |  |

## WHEELS AND TYRES

- ☐ Tread integrity across all tyres
- ☐ Wheel security: nuts, studs and bolts present, not cracked or broken
- ☐ Dual tyres not contacting each other
- ☐ Hub seals not leaking
- ☐ Mudflaps and guards secure

## LIGHTS AND REFLECTORS

- ☐ All lights fitted and operating, including clearance lights
- ☐ All reflectors and lenses present, clean and undamaged

## WINDSCREEN, MIRRORS AND WIPERS

- ☐ Windows and mirrors secure, undamaged and free of grime
- ☐ Wipers and washers give clear forward vision

## STRUCTURE AND BODYWORK

- ☐ All panels and visible structural members secure and free of cracks
- ☐ No oil, fuel, water, coolant, hydraulic or brake fluid leaking
- ☐ No air leaks

## BRAKES

- ☐ Brake failure indicators operational
- ☐ Pressure and vacuum gauges operational
- ☐ Air tanks drained of contaminants
- ☐ Brake pedal firm, park brake holds on a grade

## TOW COUPLINGS AND DRAWBARS

- ☐ Fifth wheel or ballrace and mountings secure
- ☐ Kingpin correctly engaged in the fifth wheel jaws
- ☐ Towbar, drawbar and couplings inspected for security and integrity
- ☐ Tug test done when operating in a combination

## TRAILER AND LOAD

- ☐ Trailer coupling locked and secure
- ☐ Safety chains or lines fitted
- ☐ Air lines, electrical and ABS or EBS connectors attached
- ☐ Trailer lights and brakes working
- ☐ Load restrained and within limits, restraints rated
- ☐ Mass and dimension placards and dangerous goods signage where required

## DOCUMENTATION AND IN-CAB

- ☐ Registration current; driver licence current and correct class
- ☐ Work diary on board where required
- ☐ Accreditation label fitted, not obscured or damaged, where applicable
- ☐ Fault report book kept with the vehicle
- ☐ Fire extinguisher and first aid kit present and in date

## ELECTRIC AND GAS SYSTEMS, WHERE FITTED

- ☐ High voltage wiring undamaged, no chafing, no electrolyte leaking
- ☐ Energy storage system warning light cycles on ignition; EV plate label fitted
- ☐ Gas container sound and restrained; no leaking from gas lines
- ☐ Hydrogen system warning light cycles on ignition; plate label fitted

|                         |       |                 |       |                       |       |
|-------------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| Defect found this shift | Y / N | Safe to operate | Y / N | Tagged out of service | Y / N |
| Operator signature      |       | Time            |       | Supervisor notified   |       |
| Defect detail           |       |                 |       |                       |       |

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# Pre-Start Checklist: Mobile Plant and Machinery

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Excavator, loader, dozer, roller, telehandler. Complete before first use each shift and on every change of operator.

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|                            |  |                          |  |               |  |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------------|--|---------------|--|
| Asset ID / unit no.        |  | Registration / plant no. |  | State of rego |  |
| Make and model             |  | Operator name            |  | Date          |  |
| Odometer (km)              |  | Hour meter (hrs)         |  | Depot / site  |  |
| Licence or competency held |  | Licence expiry           |  | Shift / time  |  |

## IN-CAB CHECK

- ☐ Seat functioning and adjusted; seatbelt working and in date
- ☐ Key to ON or test position: all lights, interlocks and warning devices
- ☐ Audible alarms and horn
- ☐ All gauges including fuel, oil, temperature and hour meter
- ☐ Reversing or tramming alarm and rear camera
- ☐ Windows clean and unbroken, wipers working
- ☐ Mirrors clean, unbroken, adjusted
- ☐ Loose items in the cab restrained
- ☐ Fire extinguisher or suppression gauge serviceable and in date
- ☐ Operator's manual present
- ☐ Required paperwork present

## WALK-AROUND, ENGINE OFF

- ☐ Look underneath for water, oil or hydraulic leaks
- ☐ Track condition and tension, or tyre condition and pressure
- ☐ Safe access points: steps, handholds, ROPS and FOPS undamaged
- ☐ Fluid levels: hydraulic, slew motor, transfer case, transmission, engine, coolant
- ☐ Engine belts and hoses
- ☐ Cooling system clean and unobstructed
- ☐ Hydraulic hoses, fittings and cylinders for leaks, security and damage
- ☐ Electrical cables and harnesses
- ☐ Air cleaner indicator and pre-cleaner
- ☐ Grease points adequately greased
- ☐ Debris cleared from engine bay, pump area, transmission, slew motor, valves, belly guards
- ☐ Quick hitch or coupler engaged with safety locking device in place
- ☐ Visible damage, loose or broken parts
- ☐ Ground engaging tools: teeth, cutting edges, boots
- ☐ Guards and covers in place
- ☐ Emergency stop and battery isolator

## FUNCTION CHECKS, ENGINE RUNNING

- ☐ Brakes and park brake
- ☐ Steering or tracking
- ☐ Hydraulic functions through full range
- ☐ Attachment security under load
- ☐ Travel alarm and beacon
- ☐ Boom, stick and arm operation
- ☐ No abnormal noise, smoke or vibration
- ☐ Gauges reading normal at operating temperature

## WORKSITE CHECK

- ☐ Safe access to the work area
- ☐ Overhead risks including powerlines and trees
- ☐ Recently filled trenches, uneven ground, slopes
- ☐ Underground services located
- ☐ Surrounding buildings and structures
- ☐ Bridges, causeways, dams or tidal activity
- ☐ Exclusion zone and spotter arrangements
- ☐ Other plant and pedestrians

## OPERATOR FITNESS

- ☐ Fit for work, not fatigued
- ☐ Not affected by alcohol, drugs or medication
- ☐ Holds the licence or competency for this machine
- ☐ Familiar with this machine's controls
- ☐ PPE worn
- ☐ Aware of the site emergency procedure
- ☐ Aware of the traffic management plan
- ☐ Pre-start briefing attended

## MACHINE-SPECIFIC CHECKS

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

## REGISTRATION, WHERE THE PLANT IS REGISTERABLE

- ☐ Plant registration number recorded
- ☐ Plant registration expiry recorded and current
- ☐ Inspection, maintenance and testing done by a competent person

|                         |       |                 |       |                       |       |
|-------------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| Defect found this shift | Y / N | Safe to operate | Y / N | Tagged out of service | Y / N |
| Operator signature      |       | Time            |       | Supervisor notified   |       |
| Defect detail           |       |                 |       |                       |       |

By signing, I certify this machine is safe to the limits of this inspection prior to use. Keep this record for as long as your accreditation, insurer and asset life require. Maintenance contact:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pre-Start Log

*One row per check. A fortnight on one page. Raise anything ticked as an issue on the Defect Register overleaf*

[illegible]

## Defect Register

*A defect register with no rectified date is a list of things you knew about and did not fix. Close the loop*

[illegible]

## When an item actually fails

A tick box tells you to look at the tyre. It does not tell you when the tyre is a defect. These are the thresholds the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator publishes in its own heavy vehicle daily checks guidance.

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tyre tread      | Fails below 1.5mm tread in a continuous band running the whole circumference and across at least 75% of the tyre width.                                                                                                                               |
| Tyre condition  | Fails on deep cuts, chunking, bumps, bulges, exposed cords or other signs of carcass failure. Dual tyres must not contact each other.                                                                                                                 |
| LED lamps       | Fails if more than 30% of the individual LEDs do not function. A 10-LED lamp needs at least 7 working.                                                                                                                                                |
| Windscreen      | In the area swept by the wipers: no bullseye or star fracture over 16mm across, no hairline crack over 30mm long, no crack in from the edge over 75mm long. No scoring, sandblasting or severe discolouration that interferes with the driver's view. |
| Fluid leaks     | Fails where oil escapes from the engine, gearbox, differential, brake system, power steering or any joint or seal onto brake friction surfaces, the exhaust system or the road surface.                                                               |
| Horn            | Fails if not operational, not a single tone, or not loud enough to warn other road users.                                                                                                                                                             |
| Wheels and hubs | Fails on any missing, cracked or broken wheel nuts, studs or bolts, or leaking hub seals. Wheel nut indicators are the fastest way to spot a nut that has moved.                                                                                      |

## How to use this checklist

|                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| When the check is carried out     | Before the machine is used for the first time each shift, and again on every change of operator. The second operator is the one who wears anything the first one missed. Some published checklists describe a weekly check. Daily or pre-use is the standard to work to.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Who carries it out                | The operator or driver about to use the machine. The duty sits with the business, not the person holding the pen. Whoever has management or control of plant cannot delegate that obligation by handing out a form, which is why the record and the follow-up matter as much as the ticks.                                                                                                                                                |
| How it is recorded                | One row per check on the pre-start log, or one completed checklist per shift, kept against the specific machine. Every defect goes on the defect register and stays there until it is signed off as rectified.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| What happens when something fails | Any defect on brakes, steering, tyres, couplings, load restraint or the operator restraint means the machine does not move. Tag it out, isolate it, and tell the supervisor before the shift plan gets rearranged around it. For everything else the test is whether it will get worse or unsafe during the shift. Attach a photo where you can: a written description of a hydraulic weep is close to useless to whoever has to find it. |
| How long the records are kept     | There is no single national retention period for pre-start records. Operators holding heavy vehicle accreditation are generally required to keep records for a minimum of three years, and on-road fault records are expected to stay with the vehicle. Most operators keep pre-starts for the life of the machine, because once the records are digital the storage costs nothing.                                                       |
| What this checklist is not        | It is a visual check and a starting point. It does not replace a full safety inspection, and it does not replace the manufacturer's own daily items for your specific machine. Add those from the operation and maintenance manual, and adapt the rest to your operation.                                                                                                                                                                 |

## Is a pre-start legally required?

Not as a form. No Australian law prescribes a pre-start checklist. What the law requires is the thing the checklist delivers.

Under the model work health and safety laws a vehicle used for work is plant, so a ute sits under the same duties as an excavator. Whoever has management or control of plant must manage the risks and ensure it is maintained, inspected and where necessary tested by a competent person, in line with the manufacturer's recommendations. For heavy vehicles the NHVR states that the operator is responsible for ensuring each vehicle is roadworthy, and that a daily check is a quick visual inspection done before leaving the yard, depot or rest area. Roadworthiness also sits across every party in the Chain of Responsibility, not just the driver.

So the pre-start is the accepted way of discharging a duty the law does demand, and of evidencing that you discharged it.

Free to copy, edit and use. Threshold values and the electric and gas system items are adapted from the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator fact sheet "Creating heavy vehicle daily checks" (nhvr.gov.au), used under CC BY-SA 3.0 AU. This is a guide, not legal advice, and it does not replace a full safety inspection.

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