FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

Before You Hand Over the Cash — IronHead Vintage Motorcycle Inspection Checklist

Read these pages exactly as they appear in the full guide.
Nothing here is rewritten or summarised — it is the product itself,
so you can judge the depth before you spend a dollar.

The full guide: https://ironheadguides.com/product/IH-PRE-PURCHASE-CHECKL

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IRONHEAD

Before You Hand Over the Cash

IronHead Vintage Motorcycle Inspection Checklist — with The IronHead Verdict scored section

Take this to the viewing. Work it in order, cold bike first, pen in hand. It is written for 1960s–1980s machines — carburettors, points or early electronic ignition, steel tanks and forty-plus years of other people's repairs. Fill the fields on screen or print it and write. When you finish, the last section turns what you found into a score, a plain condition band, and a number you can defend when you make — or decline — an offer.

How to use this checklist

Do not start with the shiny parts. Start with the bike stone cold, before the seller has had any chance to warm it, charge it, or wipe it down. A warm engine hides a bad cold start, thin oil hides a noisy top end, and a wiped-down case hides a leak's address. If the seller insists the bike is already warm, note it on the record page and score accordingly — that is information, not a detail.

What to bring

- A torch and a small mirror — for frame numbers, case seams and the underside.
- A multimeter — the charging test on page 8 needs one; a phone app is not a substitute.
- A tyre-pressure gauge, a magnet in a cloth (steel vs. filler vs. alloy), and a rag.
- A friend. One of you works the controls; the other watches, listens and writes.
- This checklist, a pen, and the asking price written down before you arrive.

The order matters: paperwork and numbers first (a bike you cannot legally own is not a bargain at any price), then the cold start, then systems, then the ride, then the score. Walk-away triggers appear in bold red type where they belong — at the check that reveals them, not in an appendix you will never reach.

SAMPLE EXCERPT — full guide available at the link on the cover sheet

1 · The cold-start-first workflow

Agree it in advance. When you arrange the viewing, say plainly: “Please leave it cold — I want to hear it start from cold.” A straight seller expects the request. Then work these steps in order:

- **Touch the engine.** Exhaust headers and cases should be ambient temperature. Warm metal at the start of a “cold” viewing ends the negotiation about honesty.
- **Look before you touch anything else.** Drips under the bike, a fresh oil sheen, a battery charger still connected — all noted before the key turns.
- **Fuel on, choke as the seller directs, and watch their hands.** A practised sequence of tricks — a squirt of something, a palm over an intake — tells you the start is a ritual, not a routine.
- **Count the attempts.** One or two kicks, or a short crank, is honest for a carburetted classic. Endless cranking, or a start that only happens with the throttle held wide, is a finding.
- **Listen for the first thirty seconds.** Top-end rattle that fades as oil arrives is one thing; a deep knock that stays is another. Note what you hear, and when it changes.
- **Watch the exhaust.** A puff at start-up that clears is common. Continuous blue smoke, or smoke that worsens under load later, is oil finding its way past rings or guides.

WALK AWAY: the seller will not let you start it cold, will not let you start it at all, or the bike “just ran yesterday” but cannot be made to run today while the price assumes a runner.

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2 · Paperwork, title and numbers

Read the title before you fall for the bike. The name on the title should be the seller's, the vehicle identification number on the title should match the machine in front of you character for character, and the title brand — clean, salvage, rebuilt, bonded — should be stated out loud and written down. An open title signed by someone else, a title in a third party's name, or a “lost title, bill of sale only” story each changes what you are buying.

- Frame number: find it yourself, on the steering head or frame as the model addenda describe. Read it aloud; have your friend write it.
- Engine number: read it off the cases, not off the paperwork. Engines get swapped; paper rarely mentions it.
- Compare the two against the title and against each other. On many classics they were never identical — what matters is that each is plausible for the year, unstamped-over, and consistent with the title.
- Look at the stampings, not just the characters: ground-off pads, uneven depth, a font that changes mid-number, or fresh paint only around the pad are all findings.
- Ask what papers exist: prior titles, registration history, restoration receipts, prior sale documents. A thin file is not fatal; a file that contradicts the bike is.

WALK AWAY: frame number does not match the title, stampings show grinding or restamping, or the seller cannot explain a title in someone else's name.

Frame number as read off the bike

Engine number as read off the cases

Title brand and name on title

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3 · Engine — before it turns

- Oil: pull the dipstick or open the filler. Level, colour, and smell. Fuel-thinned oil, glitter in the oil, or mayonnaise emulsion under the filler cap each tell a story — write down which.
- Turn the engine over slowly by kick lever or rear wheel (plugs out if the seller agrees): it should turn smoothly, with even resistance. A tight spot or a graunch is a finding.
- Compression, if the seller agrees to a gauge: record all cylinders. Evenness matters more than the headline number — one cylinder well down on its neighbours is the expensive sentence.
- Valve-cover and head joints: look for weeps, bodged sealant squeezed out of joints, and mismatched fasteners.
- Exhaust headers: loose nuts, cracked flanges, rust-through at the first bend, and non-standard systems sold as factory — check the addenda for what your model wore new.
- Spark plugs, if you may pull one: sooty black is mixture or oil; blistered white is lean and hot; four plugs telling four different stories is information.

Compression readings, cylinder by cylinder

Oil — level, colour, smell

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Cold-start record

Fill this in at the bike, not from memory in the car. Memory flatters every motorcycle ever sold.

Bike (year / make / model)

Seller and location

Asking price

Ambient temperature / engine cold to the touch? (Y/N)

Attempts to start / starting aids used

First-30-seconds sounds, and when they changed

Exhaust smoke — colour, when it appeared, when it cleared

Idle — settles or hunts? At roughly what revs?

- Charging / oil-pressure warning light behaved correctly
- No fuel weeping from taps, lines or carburettors
- No new drip appeared under the bike while it idled

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