

Aging Aircraft Pre-Buy Checklist

If you're thinking about purchasing an older aircraft, here are some steps to take:

- Review the maintenance logbooks with someone knowledgeable about the specific make and model. Look for FAA Form 337s (Report of Major Repair or Alteration), and note AD compliance, the status of service bulletins and letters, aircraft/component serial numbers, and gaps in inspection dates. Also watch out for repairs that might suggest damage, such as spot painting, gear or prop replacement, engine teardown, sheet metal replacement, etc. In addition, try to determine whether any renovations have been done, who did them, and whether or not any possible corrosion or contaminants were removed.
- Check with the manufacturer and type clubs: They sometimes provide inspection checklists for specific models. These can be good resources for a pre-buy inspection.
- Compare the aircraft's equipment list to the items actually installed in the aircraft. Determine whether or not the installed equipment has a logbook entry and any necessary paperwork to back it up. An equipment list, if not already available, can be ordered from the manufacturer.
- Review the type(s) of operation in which the aircraft has been used. Flight instruction, skydiving, pipeline patrol, or seaplane operations, for example, may suggest additional stress, fatigue, or the potential for corrosion.
- Determine how many hours per year the aircraft was flown. Was it generally active or inactive? A low-time aircraft might have the potential for more corrosion if it was seldom used, whereas a high-time aircraft may have less corrosion, but the accumulation of more fatigue.
- Find out how the aircraft was stored. As discussed in the course, storing an aircraft outdoors exposes it to the elements, and not all hangars provide an equal amount of protection.
- Learn where the aircraft was located throughout its life. Remember, different regional climates can have different effects on the aging of an aircraft.
- Clean the aircraft: This will help make defects and discrepancies easier to spot.
- If possible, take the aircraft for a test flight. Monitor the engine gauges, listen for unusual sounds, and keep track of oil consumption and overall performance. Detecting a problem early can help save money on repair costs in the future.

To further your pre-buy knowledge, review AOPA's *Tips on Buying Used Aircraft*.