



## Buying guide

### *Model differences*

#### UK supplied models

**Coupe** Base model in the UK. Fitted with the 3S-FE 119bhp engine. These can be identified as they do not have the factory fitted spoiler or fog lamps. Fitted with a removable moonroof, that can be stowed under the front bonnet

**GT coupe** Mid level model in the UK. GT specification gives the 3S-GE engine with power between 154 - 173 bhp depending on year. Moonroof and cloth interior as per Coupe, are the only differences compared to the UK GT T-bar

**GT T-bar** Top of the line UK model. As per GT Coupe plus removable T-bar roof panels and Leather seats / door cards.

**GT 10th anniversary** Limited production of 250 models. Same specification as the UK GT T-bar. Has cosmetic enhancements

#### Imported Japanese models (JDM)

*For more information on differences between UK and JDM models*

**G-Limited Import** Same as UK GT models. Available in 2 body styles, T-bar or Hardtop.

**GT-S Import** Turbocharged 3S-GTE engine with 225 - 245 bhp depending on year. GT-S is treated as the *sports* model, as it lacks some of the luxuries found in the JDM GT. Cloth interior as standard. Supplied with T-bar or Hardtop roof.

**GT Import** Same as GT-S, but with increased specification as standard. i.e Half leather interior and electrical folding door mirrors.

### *Differences between UK and Imported Japanese models*

Japanese imported models can have a hard to trace history, but they do tend to have a higher specification level compared to UK supplied models.

#### Typical things that UK models tend not to benefit from

Lower Mileages. (Japanese car speedometer and odometers read in KPH BTW)

Air conditioning or climate control

High level brake lamp

Electrical folding mirrors

Steerable fog lamps

Traction control

4 wheel anti lock brakes

Cruise control

Turbo charged engines (GT and GT-S)

### Inspection

The overall quality of imported models can vary dramatically. Have a look at the following as they may give an insight to the cars Japanese history.

Screw holes in the dash or A pillars, may be due to removed tuning electronics.

Holes or flaps in the carpets. Has this car previously had a roll cage or harnesses fitted?

Are date tags still fitted to the seat belts. If no, is someone hiding the cars age? For more on establishing a cars age

There is no reason why an imported model should be any less reliable than a UK supplied car, as long as you choose carefully. If a model is at a bargain price, beware and look very closely before agreeing to buy.

*Always buy with your head and not your heart!*

### How to spot an import from the outside

The easiest way to spot an import, is to look for a few tell tale differences. Bear in mind a determined owner can modify the car to look like a UK model.

Square number plates fitted.

Orange marker lamps fitted into the front bumper trims

### *Checking the engine*

There are a few simple checks to establish the overall condition of the engine.

#### Prior to starting the engine

Be careful to check the engine is cold, then remove the radiator cap. Coolant should be visible in the filler neck. This should be either red or blue in colour. Wipe your finger around the inside of the filler neck and the underside of the filler cap, checking that there is not the presence of oil in the coolant.

Visually inspect the engine for any obvious oil leaks.

#### Start the engine

The engine should start within a couple of seconds and idle smoothly. A fast idle speed is to be expected if the engine is cold. Listen for any obvious knocking or banging noises.

Allow the engine to warm until the front radiator cooling fan is activated. Look at the radiator through the grill underneath the front number plate for signs of coolant leakage and excessive corrosion or stone damage. Also look underneath the vehicle (the area directly below the seats) looking for any signs of coolant leakage from the main coolant pipes.

The engine idle speed will normally be around 750-900 rpm and the coolant temperature needle will sit at half way, when the engine has warmed fully. The engine should be smoothly idling at this point.

Only the hand brake warning light should be visible whilst the doors are closed with the engine running.

Stop engine Remove the oil cap and look underneath it for signs of a creamy substance. Also Remove the dipstick to observe the oils condition. A creamy appearance indicates a head gasket failure.

Restart the engine, to ensure it starts promptly when hot.

### *Checking the interior*

Check the drivers seat, steering wheel, pedal rubbers and carpet for signs of wear. Compare this to the mileage of the car. A heavily worn interior combined with low mileage is an obvious cause for concern. The numbers on the speedo odometer should be nicely aligned as wonky numbers may indicate a 'clocked' mileage.

Look for holes in the dashboard and A pillar for signs of removed tuning modifications.

Check that the seatbelts have their date tags fitted. More information on date checking a vehicle can be found

Check all electrical accessories to ensure proper operation. In particular ensure the electric aerial, electric windows and switches function correctly, as these are prone to failure.

Finally look and feel for evidence of water entering the car, especially those fitted with T-bar roofs.

### *Checking the bodywork*

Rust is rarely a problem on the MK2 but check around just incase. It has been known for rust to form on the underside of the doors.

Look carefully for accident damage. Crouch down and look down either side of the car to ensure the panels are aligned and check panel gaps all around the vehicle.

Remove the T-bar glasses (if fitted) and inspect the rubber seals for signs of damage and deterioration of the rubber. Leaking T-bars are very common, but can be easily fixed as long as the rubber seals are in good condition.

Test the following cable operated release mechanisms..

Boot release - Bonnet release - engine compartment release - fuel cap cover release.

### *Checking the Wheels and brakes*

Inspect each tyre to ensure wear is even across the whole tread width although it is not unusual for the inner edge of the rear tyres to wear quicker. Heavy wear to the outer edges is typical when the car has been used on a trackday.

It will be very hard to access brake pad life whilst the wheels are fitted, but have a feel of the disc surface. Heavy scoring of the disc surface and/or an excessive lip on the outer edge of the disc, means a disc and pad change is on the cards. The buying price should be adjusted accordingly.

Alloy wheel condition has a large impact on the overall appearance of the a car. Scabby looking wheels can be refurbished at a cost of around £50+vat per wheel. A set of wheels in good condition can tell you a lot about the previous owners care for the car.

### *The test drive.*

Questions to ask whilst on a test drive..

### Around town

Does the engine accelerate smoothly without hesitation?

How high does the pedal rise before the clutch bites? A high pedal could mean the clutch will require replacement within the year.

Are there any unusual engine noises? The engine will sound louder than other cars you've driven because it's only 24" away from your head!

Are there clunking noises from the suspension? This is normally the drop links and wear is very common. This is more irritating than a danger.

Does the water temperature gauge stay at the 'half way' mark?

#### At speed

Is there excessive wheel vibration at speed?

Does the car feel stable at speed?

Do the brakes 'bite' well and without vibration?

#### After the test drive

Feel the temperature of each wheel **don't touch the disc itself**. A wheel with a higher temperature may have a lazy caliper (a common problem)

*Documentation and often forgotten things!*

#### Some easily over looked things.

Is the spare wheel under the front compartment and is it in good condition?

Is the tool kit present? It will include the jack, jack handle, wheel chock, wheel brace, plier type wrench.

Is the moonroof shade present (if a coupe)?

Is the T-bar shades and storage bags present? (on T-bar models)

Is there 2 keys? 1 should be longer than the other (the master key).

#### Documents

Is there evidence of a service history?

Can the previous owner provide a nice wedge of receipts, MOTs, etc?

To be safe.

Ask the owner about the history with the car.. do they belong to any clubs. Any enthusiast will have a story to tell! If they seem vague.. are they the rightful owner?!?

If you wish to purchase the car, have a HPI check carried out. It'll cost around £35. It will confirm the car is not a write off or owned by a finance company. The AA can provide this service.

If buying from a dealer, can you pay by credit card or finance? The consumer credit act can give you more protection if the car turns out to be a 'lemon'.

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