

FREE BUYER'S GUIDE

2015 BMW 320i

A simple guide for buyers with no car knowledge.

Your safety comes first

Please read these five rules before you look at any car.



1. Flat ground, handbrake on

Only look at the car on level ground.



2. Never open the radiator cap

Hot coolant can spray out and burn you.



3. Never go under the car

Look underneath from the side only.



4. Hands away from a running engine

The fan and belts can catch fingers and clothing.



5. Test drive only with permission

Bring your licence and drive gently. Ask the seller: "Does your insurance cover me to drive it?" If it doesn't, you could have to pay for any damage yourself.

How this guide works

Two stages. No rush.



Do most of the work **from home, on the phone**. Only go and see the car if you like what you hear.



Stage 1

At home and on the phone



Checkpoint

Is it worth a visit?



Stage 2

At the car

Scoring is easy

Tick **Yes** or **No**. Yes is always the good answer. At the end, just **count your No's**. A red  means a stop sign: a "No" there matters most.

STAGE 1**Before you visit**

At home and on the phone.

01**Which 2015 320i is it?**

There are three different ones.



A facelift came in mid-2015. One non-Australian page lists a facelift 320i with 184 hp and 290 Nm. Another says some regions later got a B48B20O0 engine. We could not confirm this for Australian cars. We also could not confirm any all-wheel-drive 320i sold in Australia. Check the engine code and the compliance plate on the car.

Ask the seller:

"Which engine code is on the car, and which gearbox does it have?"

2.0L turbo petrol (320i)**N20 135 KW**

Engine code N20 B20 · 8-speed automatic on the sedan. A 6-speed manual is listed for the wagon.

- 135 kW and 270 Nm. A turbo is a fan that adds air.
- Runs on premium unleaded petrol. Engine size is 1997cc.
- A chain, not a belt, drives the valves.

2.0L turbo petrol (328i)**N20 180 KW**

Engine code N20 B20 · 8-speed automatic

- 180 kW and 350 Nm. More power than the 320i.
- Same N20 B20 engine code as the 320i.
- Listed with an 8-speed automatic.

2.0L turbo diesel (320d)**N47 DIESEL**

Engine code N47 D20 · 8-speed automatic

- 135 kW and 380 Nm for 2012 to 2015 cars.
- This one is diesel, not petrol.
- Reports of chain failure on BMW diesels built until 2015.

Good to know: safety rating

Which 320i	ANCAP rating
BMW 3 Series, build dates 2012 to Feb 2019. ANCAP says the rating applies to the 320d diesel variant. We found no separate ANCAP rating for the 320i petrol.	5 stars (36.76 out of 37)

As published by ANCAP. Older ratings, tested to easier standards than today's.

02

The big-money items

The parts that cost the most to fix.



You can't see inside these parts, but you can ask about them.

\$ under \$500 · \$\$ \$500 to \$2,000 · \$\$\$ over \$2,000 (rough guide)



Timing chain, guides and tensioner

N20 B20 PETROL ENGINE (320I AND 328I). CHAIN FAILURE REPORTS ALSO EXIST FOR N47

WHAT IT IS

A chain at the front of the engine keeps the valves in step. Plastic guides hold it tight. If it slips, engine parts can hit each other. Australian price not found. The tier is our estimate.

ASK

"Is there an invoice for the timing chain and guides, and did you hear any rattle on a cold start?"



High-pressure fuel pump

N20 B20 ENGINE (320I AND 328I)

\$\$

WHAT IT IS

The pump that pushes fuel into the engine. One page calls it a known fault on some production batches. Australian price not found.

ASK

"Has the fuel pump ever been replaced, and has the car had hard starting or rough idling?"



Water pump and thermostat

N20 B20 ENGINE (320I AND 328I)

\$\$

WHAT IT IS

The water pump moves coolant around the engine. The thermostat is a valve that controls engine heat. Pages name both as weak points. Australian price not found.

ASK

"Has the water pump or thermostat been replaced, and is there an invoice?"



Oil leaks: valve cover and oil filter housing

N20 B20 ENGINE (320I AND 328I)

\$\$

WHAT IT IS

Seals on the top cover or the oil filter holder can leak oil. One page says these repairs cost less than the timing chain. The tier is our estimate.

ASK

"Have any oil or coolant leaks been fixed, and is there an invoice?"



Automatic gearbox leaks and fluid service

\$\$

ZF 8-SPEED AUTOMATIC (320i, 328i AND 320D)

WHAT IT IS

One guide calls this gearbox very reliable. It lists leak points at the oil cooler joins and a gearbox seal. BMW calls the fluid lifetime, but ZF suggests changes. Australian price not found.

ASK

"When was the automatic gearbox fluid last changed, and is there an invoice?"

03

Regular maintenance

Cheap jobs that protect the expensive parts.



Look for these on the service invoices.



Engine oil

Fresh oil keeps the engine parts moving smoothly.

As shown in the logbook



Spark plugs or fuel filter

Petrol engines have spark plugs. Diesel engines have a fuel filter.

As shown in the logbook



Brake fluid

The fluid that makes the brakes work. It absorbs water over time.

Every 2 years (our guide)



Coolant

The liquid that stops the engine getting too hot.

As shown in the logbook



Gearbox oil

Oil inside the automatic gearbox. BMW calls it lifetime, so ask when it was last changed.

As shown in the logbook



Air filter

Cleans the air going into the engine.

As shown in the logbook



Tyres

Old rubber hardens, even when the tread looks good.

**Replace at 6 years old, even with good tread (our guide).
Alignment every 10,000 to 15,000 km (our guide)**



Battery

Starts the engine and runs the electrics.

Most last about 3 to 5 years

04

Questions to ask on the phone



Tick Yes if you get the good answer.

Ask the seller	Good answer	Yes	No
"Is it registered in your name?" Why: Only the owner can legally sell it to you.	"Yes."		
"Why are you selling it?" Why: A clear reason helps you trust the rest of the story.	A clear reason.		
! "Can you send me the VIN?" Why ask? The VIN is the car's 17-character ID number, like a fingerprint. With it you can check online if there's money owing , if it was written off after a big accident, if it's been reported stolen , and if it has any recalls (Section 06). An honest seller will send it.	They send it.		
"Has it been in an accident?" Why: Repairs can hide damage. An invoice shows it was fixed properly.	"No", or they have the repair invoice.		
"Does it have service invoices?" Why: They show the car was looked after.	"Yes."		
Which engine code is on the car, and what does the compliance plate say about the drive type? Why: We could not confirm an all-wheel-drive 320i sold in Australia.	The plate and paperwork match the advert. The seller can read both out.		
Is there an invoice for the timing chain and guides? Why: The chain is a known thing to check on this engine.	A dated invoice with the kilometres, or a clear answer that it has not been done.		
When was the automatic gearbox fluid last changed? Why: BMW calls the fluid lifetime, but ZF suggests changing it.	A logbook stamp or invoice with the date and kilometres.		
"Are any warning lights on?" Why: A light means the car has found a fault.	"No."		
"Can you leave it cold before I arrive?" Why: Some problems only show when the engine is cold.	"Sure."		

Tip

Write down what they say. See if the answers stay the same when you visit.

05

Check the invoices

Ask the seller to send you photos.



Ask the seller:

"Could you send me photos of the service book and invoices?"

Looking at the invoices	Yes	No
-------------------------	-----	----

Did they send them?

Does each one show the workshop name, date and kilometres?

Do the kilometres go up each time?

Do the services follow the logbook, with no gaps of more than a year?

Words you might see on an invoice

Invoice says	It means
Timing chain, guide rail, tensioner	The chain that keeps the engine's valves in step, and the plastic parts that hold it tight.
VANOS	BMW's name for its variable valve timing system. It changes when the valves open.
Valve cover gasket or oil filter housing gasket	A gasket is a seal. These seal the top engine cover and the oil filter holder. Both can leak oil.
HPFP	The high-pressure fuel pump. It pushes fuel into the engine.
Mechatronic sleeve	A seal where the gearbox's electronics enter it.
Steptronic	BMW's name for its automatic gearbox.

06

Quick checks at home

All you need is the VIN. Five minutes.



1. Recalls

Type the VIN into either site:

recall.bmw.com.au

vehiclerecalls.gov.au

Safety recalls are fixed for free by the maker. Helpline 1800 243 675.

2. Money owing

Search the VIN at:

ppsr.gov.au

It shows money owing, write-offs and theft. Small fee. Check again on the day you pay.

Your result

Yes

No

 **PPSR is clear**

No open recalls, or proof they were fixed

Good to know

Wikipedia says a class action was filed in 2017 by owners against BMW over faulty units. It does not say which country, and we found none for Australia. Ask the seller: "Has the engine had any maker repair or program work? Do you have the papers?"

Checkpoint: is it worth a visit?

Count your No's from Sections 04, 05 and 06.



My No's

Stop signs with No



Any stop sign with a No?

Don't go yet. Sort it out with the seller first.

0 to 2

Go and look

Take Stage 2 with you.

3 to 5

Ask more first

Ask the seller about each No. Go if you're happy.

6 or more

Is it worth the trip?

A lot couldn't be confirmed.

The decision is always yours.

Want to check it like a mechanic?

The 2015 BMW 320i Buyer's Inspection Guide shows you every check, step by step, with drawings of where to look.

Get the full guide · \$29

General information only, not an inspection of any vehicle. "Our guide" means our recommendation, not a legal rule. Costs are a rough guide. Information current at October 2026: always check the VIN yourself. Perth Cars Pre-Purchase Inspection Service · ACN 612 731 996 · Licence Nos. LVS/WSS MR20570 · MS30917 · 0451 237 048 · info@autolab360.com · perthprepurchaseinspection.com

STAGE 2**At the car**

Take this guide with you.

07**Dashboard warning lights**

The colour tells you how serious it is.

**Red = Stop**

Serious

**Yellow = Check**

Needs a look

**Green = OK**

Just information

The one-minute light test**1****Key on**

Lights come on. Good!

2**Start the engine**

Lights go out.

3**Watch**

Any light left on? Ask about it.

**Check engine**

Engine fault found.

**Battery**

Not charging.

**Oil pressure**

Low oil. Stop the engine.

**Engine too hot**

Overheating. Stop.

**Brake**

Handbrake on, or a brake fault.

**ABS**

Anti-skid brake fault.

**Airbag**

Airbags may not work.

**1. Paint and panels****GOOD**

Same colour everywhere, even gaps.

ASK ABOUT IT

One panel a different colour.

**2. Cold start sound****GOOD**

The engine starts and settles smoothly. There is no rattle or clacking from the front.

ASK ABOUT IT

Ask if the engine was cold when you arrived. Ask if any timing chain work was done.

**3. Oil drips and wet patches****GOOD**

The engine looks dry. There are no fresh oil drips or wet patches around it.

ASK ABOUT IT

Ask if any oil or coolant leaks have been fixed, and ask to see the invoice.

**4. Tyres****GOOD**

Even wear. The 4 numbers on the side (like **2319** = 2019) show under 6 years old.

ASK ABOUT IT

Worn on one edge, cracked, or 6+ years old.

**5. Cold start****GOOD**

Starts quickly. Any smoke clears in a minute.

ASK ABOUT IT

Hard to start, rattles, or keeps smoking.

**6. Test drive****BEFORE YOU DRIVE**

Seller says yes, their insurance covers you.

GOOD

Goes straight. Smooth gears. Firm brakes.

ASK ABOUT IT

Pulls to one side, clunks, or a warning light.

09

Your scorecard

Tick Yes or No, then count your No's.



At the car	Yes	No
Engine was cold when I arrived		
! VIN on the car matches the rego papers		
Seller's answers were the same as on the phone		
Paint even, no bubbly rust		
Sits level		
Tyres look good and are under 6 years old		
! Light test passed		
! Started easily, smoke cleared		
Windows, locks and air-con work, two keys		
Drives straight, smooth gears, firm brakes		
! No warning light on the drive		
Is there an invoice showing the timing chain work was done?		
Does the engine start with no rattle from the front when cold?		

My No's

____ / 13

Stop signs with No

What your count means



Any stop sign with a No?

Stop. Don't pay a deposit until it's sorted.

0 to 1

Looks well cared for

Many buyers still get a mechanic to check inside the engine.

2 to 3

A few questions

Ask the seller, and ask a mechanic what each No might cost.

4 to 6

Lots of unknowns

Get a mechanic to look before you pay anything.

7 or more

Many warning signs

Take your time and get advice first.

The decision is always yours.