

Fair wear and tear guide



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Welcome to the Activa fair wear and tear guide

Perhaps you're a driver who has just had a new company car delivered, or maybe a fleet manager, trying to keep a lid on costs. Whichever bracket you fall into, this publication was designed to help you keep that new vehicle in tip-top condition and minimise those dreaded end of contract charges.

What is an end of contract charge? Well, as nice and shiny as that new car or van may seem when it's first delivered, we're well aware that when it's returned to us after three or four years, it will show signs of wear and tear. Let's face it, no matter how well we look after ourselves and how many preventive measures we take, there will always be those inevitable signs of ageing. And in most respects, vehicles are no different!

Because we're aware of this, we ask every customer to return their leased vehicle to us in a reasonable state of repair. At the end of a lease, your vehicle is collected by an Activa representative and returned to our storage facility, where it is inspected under controlled conditions. Any areas of concern deemed to be damage, or excessive wear and tear, are recorded on a condition report that we then share with you. This report details the costs involved for repairing issues outside of the fair wear and tear guidelines set down by the BVRLA. When Activa decides whether or not to recharge for a repair, we take into account several factors, such as:

- Will the damage affect the vehicle's resale value?
- Is the damage a result of abuse or neglect?
- Is the wear and tear excessive in relation to the vehicle's age and mileage?

However, we understand that your interpretation of damage might differ from ours. After all, it's fair to say that no company, or driver, wants to see an end of contract condition charge. So we recommend that you ask yourself a simple question to assess the condition of a vehicle at contract end.

'Would I buy this vehicle in its current condition if it was for sale on a forecourt?' If the answer to that question is an honest 'yes,' then it's likely that there will be no end of contract condition or damage charges.

If you're at all unsure, get in touch with us. We're here to help answer any queries you may have regarding this guide or our end of contract procedures. Please contact a member of our re-marketing team on 01908 288400 or at endofcontract@activacontracts.co.uk.



Fair wear and tear standards

What is fair wear and tear?

The deterioration of a vehicle's condition after a period of normal use is referred to as fair wear and tear. This is not to be confused with damage, which occurs as a result of a specific event or series of events such as an impact, harsh treatment, inappropriate stowing of items, or negligent acts or omissions.

The BVRLA industry standard

The BVRLA produces three different Fair Wear and Tear Guides for various classes of vehicles; including passenger vehicles, MPVs and light commercial vehicles, and heavy goods vehicles.

The aim of these guides is to offer an industry-wide accepted standard that defines fair wear and tear for vehicles that are returned to a BVRLA member, like Activa, at the end of a contract or finance agreement. The guides also provide advice for best practice in vehicle maintenance that helps prevent unacceptable wear and tear from happening.

The industry standard is defined using both images and text for every aspect of the vehicle's condition in the following areas:

- General appearance, documentation, keys
- Paintwork, vehicle body, bumpers and trim
- Windows and glass
- Tyres and wheels
- Mechanical condition
- Vehicle interior
- Equipment and controls

You can request a copy of the BVRLA industry standard from Activa on 01908 288400 or by emailing endofcontract@activacontracts.co.uk.





Why do we have end of contract charges?

Activa's end of contract charges reflect the repair costs or the loss of value when a vehicle is returned to us in a poorer condition than originally contracted.

When charges apply, we explain the policy we have and how it relates to the type of damage that is chargeable to our customers. This includes the starting point in terms of restoration costs and a statement of what constitutes fair wear and tear.

Activa employs the BVRLA's industry fair wear and tear standard as a basis for damage recharges and agrees that the BVRLA will arbitrate in the rare case of a dispute.





Avoiding end of contract charges

As part of Arnold Clark Finance, we have been leasing cars and light commercial vehicles since before England won the World Cup in 1966.

Over the years, we have built up vast knowledge about vehicles and their condition. This expertise allows us to confidently address several areas where damage is likely to occur and how you can avoid it.

Wheels

We appreciate that having a car for three or four years and not scraping an alloy wheel is pretty much a miracle; even the most careful of drivers can suffer this fate.

The BVRLA guide suggests members allow 50mm of damage over the entire rim circumference of the wheel before it's considered as excessive wear and tear. Since we don't think that's much leeway, Activa also asks the question:

'Would we buy this car in its current condition if it was for sale on a forecourt?'

Unfortunately, from a wear and tear point of view, wheels are one of the first things a potential purchaser looks at when assessing a car. As any damage will make the car less desirable, we almost always refurbish alloy wheels. However, we often only recharge costs where we believe the damage has been as a result of neglect or impact.

Bonnet and front bumper chips

Unless your vehicle is wrapped in cotton wool, it's almost impossible to avoid stone chips. Therefore, at Activa we will only charge for the repair of this damage if it is excessive or severe.

Even though we take this approach, there are still measures you can take to prevent this kind of damage from happening. Our remarketing manager, Martin Hughes, says:

'Driving too close to the vehicle in front reduces the time a stone has to slow down through the air before it hits your nice shiny paintwork. It also reduces your ability to stop in an emergency. Leaving a safe distance between you and the car in front will not only help to reduce stone chips, it may also help to avoid an accident.'

Bumper scuffs

It would be ironic if bumpers never hit anything. By definition, they are there to protect the more sensitive areas of the vehicle. However, any scuffs or damage to bumpers give the impression that your car may not have been looked after during its lease. More often than not, it's just a slight error of judgement. However, because most bumpers are painted, they will look unsightly if they're damaged and will usually need attention.

If you want to pro-actively reduce the chance of this type of incident, we recommend you use parking sensors or assisted parking systems.

Windscreens and glass

The BVRLA guide states that any chips or cracks on the windscreen are unacceptable. However, we think that's a little harsh!

Minor chips, where the glass shows no signs of cracking, are easily repairable and may not be chargeable if they are not in the driver's line of sight. Where a chip has caused the glass to crack – especially within the area directly in the driver's line of sight (the A zone) – a repair may not be possible or desirable, and the only remedy is to replace the windscreen.

If your vehicle has a heating element to help defrost the glass in cold weather, you should also be aware that a stone chip can fracture one of the wires embedded in the glass and cause a failure. Again, the only remedy for this is to replace the screen. Where there are scratches to vehicle glass, Activa will usually charge to replace the affected window.

Replacement quotes for damaged glass are provided by our current partner and are given at trade prices.





Paintwork and body panels

Activa recognises that most damage to the side of a vehicle occurs when the car or van is stationary. We sympathise with you when you return to your car after a shopping trip to find someone has opened their car door into yours. In the majority of cases, this damage is fairly easy to correct and is overlooked by Activa. There are, unfortunately, a few occasions when a charge is necessary.

- The damage is on a 'swage' line – A swage line is a styling line on a vehicle where the metal has been formed and pressed in such a way that, if dented, the dent cannot simply be pulled out.
- The damage is on a 'box section' – Some body panels are actually structural parts of a car and there is no way to access the area behind a dent to push it back out.
- A 'deep' scratch - So how do we define a deep scratch? If you run your fingernail across the scratch and it catches in the groove, the only repair available is to repaint the panel. If it doesn't catch in the groove, the scratch can normally be polished with special compounds and made to look as good as new.
- A linear dent – A linear dent is where an impact has caused the metal to stretch in a straight line. In the case of pin dents, the metal usually stretches uniformly around a central point and makes it fairly easy to repair. However, with linear dents, the metal stretches differently and the damage cannot usually be repaired by simply pushing out the dent. This is where you may see a rippling effect where an unsuccessful attempt has been made to repair.

As metal is quite unforgiving, any side damage that occurred whilst the vehicle was moving almost always requires repair.

Paint contamination

As the exterior of the car is covered in paint, it's pretty obvious that it's going to suffer from the rigours of a few years in the outside world. Vehicle manufacturers have been aware of this for decades and the paint that is now applied to cars and vans is very hardwearing. However, there are a couple of things that it really doesn't like – some natural, some manmade.

Bird droppings – Birds just seem to aim for clean cars. Why? They see the glint from the paintwork, think it's water, and suddenly you're spending your Sunday afternoon cleaning it up. Bird droppings and car paintwork really don't get along too well. There are a number of published studies which address why they have such a detrimental effect on paint, but whatever the reason, if you don't wash it off your vehicle it can cause the paint to blister and corrode. There's no other remedy but to repaint the affected panel and because it usually happens on the roof – the biggest panel of all – this isn't cheap to put right.

Sun cream – Bizarrely, sun cream can cause damage to your car's paintwork. Perhaps this explains why the paintwork issues we can encounter involve small handprints around the back doors and wings! If the cream isn't washed off the car almost immediately, you will end up with a permanent reminder of your holiday on your car. The only remedy? You've guessed it – the panel will need to be repainted.

Interior damage

For every mile your car travels, someone is sitting in the driver's seat. Therefore, the area around the driver will be subject to wear and tear.

The area that always causes contention is the driver's footwell and carpet. After all, where are you supposed to put your feet when you are driving? The carpet in a car is actually supplied and fitted in one complete piece, so it's not normally possible to simply repair a certain section. Activa provides carpet mats in every car we supply to help protect the carpet underneath. We also replace them free of charge upon request.

Activa expects the rest of the interior of a car to be undamaged when it's returned. Most pieces of interior trim are expensive to replace, both in parts and labour time, so please do try to look after the inside of your car.

For guidance on how we appraise light commercial vehicles, please speak with our remarketing team on 01908 288400 or email them at endofcontract@activacontracts.co.uk.

Equipment

There are many items of detachable equipment that are fitted to cars and vans. From sat nav discs and handbook packs to parcel shelves and even seats, we do ask that the vehicle is returned to us with everything it was originally supplied with.





Appraising your vehicle

We recommend that you use the appraisal checklist at the end of this guide before your vehicle is returned to us. It is important to appraise your vehicle as honestly as you can. To make sure you are objective throughout, you may want to ask a friend or colleague to help you with your appraisal.

Remember to ask yourself: 'Would I buy this car in its current condition if it was for sale on a forecourt?'

Key tips when appraising your vehicle

- Carry out the appraisal of the vehicle 10–12 weeks before it's due for return. This will allow you enough time to arrange to have any unacceptable wear and tear rectified.
- Ensure that any detachable items (spare keys, handbook packs including the service book, locking wheel nut key, parcel shelf, head restraints and seats) are present.
- Choose a time and place with good light. This is how the Activa representative will examine your vehicle. Appraisals carried out in poor light invariably miss some faults.
- Before appraising the vehicle, make sure that it has been washed and is thoroughly clean. Remember to allow time for it to dry. Any water on the paintwork can easily mask faults.
- Walk all the way around the vehicle and examine each panel closely. Remember to check the roof, bonnet and doors for significant damage. Observe where the light is reflected differently from dents and scratches.
- Crouch or kneel down at the front and rear of the vehicle and look along each side.
- This will help you see scratches and dents that may otherwise be difficult to spot.
- Take time to inspect areas that are difficult to see. Damage to the vehicle's sills or roof can be costly to repair and these areas can be easily overlooked.
- Check the windscreen for chips, cracks or poorly repaired damage.
- Inspect lamps, lenses and mirrors for chips, cracks and holes. A tell-tale sign of damage is water ingress inside of a light cluster, causing condensation to form. Fog lamps at the front of the car are often prone to damage as they are close to the ground, and directly in the line of fire for errant stones.

- Inspect wheels and wheel trims for deterioration or damage. Check the tyres (including the spare) for damage, paying particular attention to areas adjacent to wheel damage. Not only will a damaged tyre be recharged back, it may also prevent the collection of the vehicle, resulting in more unwanted costs.
- Have the interior cleaned and valeted. Check upholstered areas for tears, burns, stains and excessive wear. Pay particular attention to this area if there have been pets travelling with you in the car.
- Inspect and test all controls, including audio equipment and accessories – they should be present and fully functional. Be warned: a missing satellite navigation disc can cost upwards of £300 to replace.





Our collection procedure

At the end of the lease when your vehicle is to be collected, it must be in a safe and roadworthy condition.

During collection, both you and our representative must check and agree on the vehicle condition. All readily apparent damage to the vehicle will be noted on the vehicle collection sheet. By using our vehicle appraisal checklist before collection, you can avoid any unexpected disclosures.

Upon arrival at Activa's nominated site, your vehicle will receive a thorough inspection by a qualified member of our inspection team. They will then produce a photographic schedule of any damage and send this directly to our remarketing team for review.

Subsequently, a member of our remarketing department will send you the photographic report and provide you with a breakdown of any potential charges. This is often fulfilled within seven days of the collection. If you dispute our findings, any objections must be raised within five working days, after which time any repairs deemed necessary will be carried out and the vehicle decommissioned.





Vehicle appraisal checklist

This checklist will help you identify any wear and tear on your vehicle before it is returned to Activa.

We suggest you use this for inspection 10–12 weeks before the vehicle is collected to allow enough time to rectify any issues.

Date of appraisal		Make	
Registration number		Model	
Mileage at inspection		Colour	

	Condition	Notes / Actions
Bonnet		
Front panel		
Nearside front wing		
Nearside front door		
Nearside rear door		
Nearside rear wing		
Nearside body sill		
Boot lid and tailgate		
Rear panel		
Offside front wing		
Offside front door		
Offside rear door		
Offside rear wing		
Offside body sill		

	Condition	Notes / Actions
Roof		
Aerials, badges, decals		
Bumpers and body mouldings		
Windows and mirrors		
Lamp lenses		
Tyres		
Wheels and trims		
Front seats		
Rear seats		
Headlining and carpets		
Interior door trims		
Dashboard and console		
Controls and electronic / audio equipment		
Luggage area		

Tyre tread depth		Offside front	
Nearside front		Nearside rear	
Offside rear		Spare	

Availability of detachable items:

Registration V5C Keys / Spares

Service booklet / Manual Handbook(s)

Additional info i.e. MOT receipts, repair warranty

Additional equipment i.e. sat nav, parcel shelf



Help you
can trust

Activa hopes that this guide has given you some helpful advice for looking after your vehicle, and we look forward to it being returned to us in the best condition possible.

Remember, our aim is to help you keep damage charges to an absolute minimum. Having a vehicle returned to us in good condition at the end of its contract makes our job much easier when we eventually go on to sell that car or van. We won't make a charge just because an issue has been identified outside a particular set of guidelines; we are always realistic in our viewpoint. If our vehicles are returned in such good condition that we never have to make another end of contract charge, we would be delighted!

For further information on end of contract procedures at Activa, please contact one of our remarketing experts.



Get in touch

We would love to hear from you and how we can help you, so please get in touch:

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