

## Advice On Buying A Used Vehicle

If you are buying a vehicle privately and it is later identified as having been stolen you may have no right in law to its ownership.

**You could lose both the vehicle and the money you paid for it.**

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**The following points may help you avoid becoming a victim of car crime:**

- To begin with, decide what make and model you are interested in and find out where the vehicle's identification numbers (VIN) should be.

### THE SELLER

- Beware of mobile phone numbers in advertisements, they are virtually untraceable.
- Advertisements specifying a time to call (e.g. "between 5pm and 6pm) could indicate a phone box - be suspicious.
- Arrange to view the vehicle in daylight, preferably at the seller's home. Do not agree to the seller bringing the vehicle to your home or to a public place such as a motorway service station.
- Ensure that he or she is familiar with it and its controls.

### THE REGISTRATION DOCUMENT (V5)



- Never buy a vehicle without a registration document even if the seller says it has been sent to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) for changes.
- Hold the document up to the light - the DVLA watermark should be contained within the layers of paper; satisfy yourself that a fraudulent watermark has not been merely printed on to the surface of the paper.
- Remember that the person recorded on the document may not be the legal owner; it is not a document of title.
- Satisfy yourself that the person selling the vehicle has the right to do so.

### VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS

- Check that the 17 - character Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), normally found on a metal plate in the engine compartment, matches the VIN on the registration document. Be suspicious if it shows signs of having been tampered with such as rivets having been disturbed.
- If the VIN plate has been removed, ask why!
- The VIN should also be stamped in somewhere on the vehicle, often under the bonnet or in the floor panel on the driver's side. Check the surrounding area for signs of any alteration. The 17 digits should be evenly stamped and should match the registration document.

### VEHICLE REGISTRATION NUMBERS

## 'Q' Registration Numbers

These are a very useful consumer protection aid. A "Q" number is a clear indicator to a prospective purchaser that the age or identity of a vehicle is unknown. The vehicle may be rebuilt from parts, some or all of which may not be new. This also applies to vehicles imported without supporting evidence to identify the vehicles age.

## WINDOWS

- If a registration mark or part VIN is etched on the windows ensure it matches the registration document.
- Check carefully underneath stickers, where fitted - they can be used to conceal etching.

## ENGINE

- Does the engine number match the registration document?
- Has it been interfered with or altered? Has the engine been changed?

## LOCKS

- Do the locks differ? (Thieves often change locks they have damaged).
- Are there any signs of forced entry?
- Has the locking petrol cap been forced and replaced?

## FINALLY

- Consider taking an independent qualified examiner with you to see the vehicle.
- Consider checking with one of several private companies that hold information on vehicles, whether it has been reported as stolen, seriously damaged or is still subject to finance.
- Never pay cash.
- The following information can be obtained through our Vehicle Check Service.
  - [Date of Registration](#)
  - [Year of Manufacture](#)
  - [Engine Capacity \(c.c.\)](#)
  - [Colour](#)

The Vehicle Check Service is a premium rate telephone service and **calls are charged at 49p per minute**. The telephone number is **0906 185 85 85**. This service operates Monday to Friday between 8:00am and 8:30pm, also Saturday between 8:00am to 5:30pm.

**BE SURE BEFORE YOU BUY - if in doubt, walk away.**

Further information and advice can be obtained from two leaflets, "*The Car - Buyer's Guide*" and "*Steer Clear of Car Crime*". These are available free of charge from [DVLA Local Office](#) and from your local Crime Prevention Officer (ask at your local police station for further information).

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## Seriously Damaged Vehicles

### What do I do if my vehicle is declared a total loss by my insurance company?

It is your responsibility to notify DVLA if you have disposed of your vehicle in return for a total loss payment.

If you have the

- new style registration document (introduced March 1997) you should complete the red section and return to DVLA
- old style registration document (issued before 24 March 1997) you should complete the bottom tear-off slip and return to DVLA.

The remainder of the document should be passed to your insurers. If you no longer have a document, you should write to DVLA stating the name of your insurance company and the date you transferred the vehicle.