LICENSE PLATE LOOKUP

How a **license plate lookup** works: find the VIN by license plate, check a car's history and recalls from its plate, what the DPPA really allows in a license plate owner lookup, state plate rules and temporary tags, and the **Carfax license plate lookup** compared.

Free	50 + DC	$14.99
plate-to-VIN search at carcheckervin.com	states plus DC you can search by plate	full vehicle history report once you have the VIN

CarCheckerVIN

www.carcheckervin.com/license-plate-lookup

Free license plate lookup · VIN lookup · Vehicle history reports

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ABOUT THIS LICENSE PLATE LOOKUP GUIDE

A **license plate lookup** turns the characters on a plate into the number that unlocks a car's records: its 17-character VIN. This guide explains what a plate search can find, what federal privacy law keeps private, and how to get from a plate in a listing photo to a full vehicle history.

It is published by **CarCheckerVIN (carcheckervin.com)**, which runs a free license plate to VIN search and a free VIN decoder, and sells full vehicle history reports. The legal sections quote the Driver's Privacy Protection Act itself (18 U.S.C. §§ 2721–2725) and the record-request forms published by the California and Texas motor vehicle agencies. State plate rules come from each state's own agency pages and statutes, listed on the back page. Where a rule differs by state, we name the state.

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FREE LICENSE PLATE LOOKUP

Run a plate while you read

Enter a plate number and its issuing state at **carcheckervin.com/license-plate-lookup**. You get the VIN with the year, make, model and engine, then a free preview of the vehicle's history records, with no credit card. A full vehicle history report is $14.99.

How to use this guide

Buying from a listing

Read Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 10. They take you from a plate in a photo to a checked VIN before you hand over money.

Want the owner's name?

Chapter 6 explains the DPPA: who may get owner records, how they ask, and why sites promising names are a warning sign.

Owner, seller or dealer

Chapters 7, 8 and 11 cover what happens to plates when a car is sold, temporary tags, recalls by plate and bulk checks.

BUYER'S SHORTCUT

WHERE TO RUN A LICENSE PLATE LOOKUP & WHERE TO BUY THE REPORT

Turning a plate into a VIN can be free. Finding out what happened to the car costs money. Getting the owner's name is restricted by federal law, whatever you pay.

OUR PICK

CarCheckerVIN · www.carcheckervin.com

- **Free plate-to-VIN search**, all 50 states and DC
- **Free decode** and **free history preview**, no card
- **Full vehicle history report: $14.99**, no subscription
- **Packs:** 3 for $35.99, 5 for $54.99, 10 for $89.99
- Title brands, NMVTIS title records, odometer, owners
- Total-loss, liens, impounds, auction sales with photos
- Service records, open recalls, specs, market value
- Vehicle data only: never owner names or addresses

Look up a plate free at carcheckervin.com/license-plate-lookup → Dealers: wholesale pricing and bulk API at **/dealers**.

License plate lookup options compared

Where	Cost	What you get from a plate	Owner name?
CarCheckerVIN	Free; report $14.99	VIN, specs, free history preview, full report	No
NHTSA recall lookup	Free	Open safety recalls, by VIN or plate	No
Carfax plate search	Widely quoted at $44.99	The VIN and a Carfax history report	No
State DMV request	CA INF 70 $5; TX VTR-275 $2–$6.75	The state's record; owner details only for a DPPA permitted use	Permitted use only
"Owner name" sites	Varies; often subscriptions	Promises DMV records can't lawfully keep for the public	Red flag

How to choose a plate lookup

- ☐ It asks for the **issuing state**.
- ☐ It shows the **VIN**, so you can match it to the car.
- ☐ It says what's free **before** you pay.
- ☐ It does **not** promise owner names or addresses.
- ☐ It leads to title, odometer and total-loss records.
- ☐ One car, one report: no subscription.

Comparing several cars? Run every plate free, then buy full reports only for your shortlist; a 5-pack costs $54.99, or $11 a report.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS A LICENSE PLATE LOOKUP?

A **license plate lookup** is a search that takes a plate number and the state that issued it, finds the vehicle registered under that plate, and returns that vehicle's identity: above all, its VIN.



Illustration only: a generic plate, not any state's real design.

1. **Issuing state.** The state name is part of the plate's identity. You need it for every search.
2. **Plate number.** The serial the state assigned, or a combination the owner chose (a vanity plate).
3. **Validation tab.** The sticker or decal showing the registration is current, where the state uses one.
4. **County or slogan.** Some plates add a county or a slogan; Idaho and Wyoming officially code the county into standard plates.

Plate lookup, VIN lookup, owner lookup: the difference

Search	You enter	You get	Who can run it
License plate lookup / license plate search	Plate + state	VIN, year, make, model, engine	Anyone, for vehicle data
Plate to VIN / VIN by license plate	Plate + state	The 17-character VIN	Anyone
VIN lookup	VIN	Specs plus records tied to that VIN	Anyone
Vehicle history by license plate	Plate + state, then VIN	Title brands, odometer, total-loss, liens, auctions, recalls	Anyone (paid report)
License plate owner lookup	Plate + state	Registered owner's name and address	Only for a DPPA permitted use, through the state agency

Is there a free license plate lookup?

Yes, for the vehicle side. CarCheckerVIN's plate-to-VIN search and decode are free, and so is NHTSA's recall search by plate. What costs money is history: title, mileage, total-loss and auction records gathered from states, insurers and auctions. CarCheckerVIN's full report is $14.99.

Who runs plate lookups? Mostly used-car shoppers who see a car on a lot or in an ad before they know its VIN. Also owners checking recalls, drivers documenting a car for a police report, and dealers appraising trade-ins.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT A LICENSE PLATE LOOKUP CAN AND CAN'T SHOW

A plate is a key to a *vehicle* record. Everything that describes the car can follow from it. Everything that identifies a person stays behind a legal wall.

What you can get from a plate

- The VIN of the vehicle registered to the plate
- Year, make, model, trim, body and engine
- Drive type, fuel type and assembly plant
- Title records and state title brands (via the VIN)
- Odometer readings reported over time
- Insurance total-loss records
- Lien history and impound information
- Auction sales, often with photos
- Open safety recalls

What a plate lookup won't give you

- The owner's name, home address or phone number
- A driver's license number or license photo
- Social Security number, medical or disability details
- Who was driving at a particular moment
- Where the car is right now
- Police crash reports (the agency that wrote one releases it)
- Theft or accident records from CarCheckerVIN (it reports insurance total-losses instead; NICB's free VINCheck covers theft)

Where the law draws the line

The federal Driver's Privacy Protection Act (DPPA) controls **personal information** taken from a state motor vehicle record. It defines that term (18 U.S.C. § 2725(3)) as information that identifies an individual, "including an individual's photograph, social security number, driver identification number, name, address (but not the 5-digit zip code), telephone number, and medical or disability information." Photographs, Social Security numbers and medical or disability information are a stricter category, **highly restricted personal information** (§ 2725(4)), which generally needs the person's written consent.

Notice what is not on the list: the car. Make, model, VIN and title status describe a vehicle, not a person, and that difference is why a **license plate search** can tell you what a car is and what has happened to it, but not who owns it.

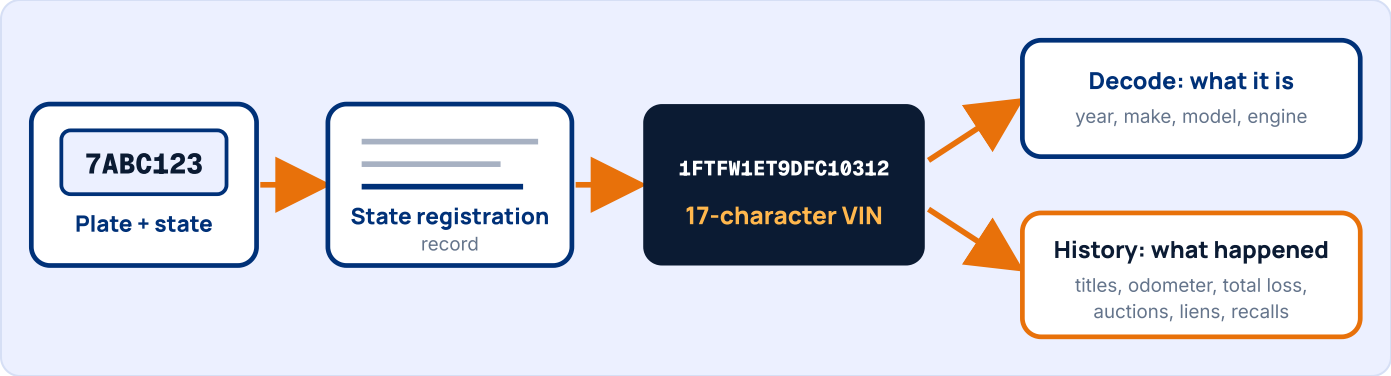
A plate describes a registration, not a driver

The person behind the wheel may be a family member, a borrower, a renter or an employee. And if the car changed hands recently, the plate may now belong to a different car altogether (Chapter 3b). Treat a plate result as a lead to the VIN, then confirm that VIN on the vehicle itself.

CHAPTER 3

HOW PLATE TO VIN WORKS

Every plate is issued by a state agency and recorded against one vehicle's VIN in that state's registration file. A **plate to VIN** search resolves the plate through registration data and hands back the VIN. Everything else in a history report is then looked up by that VIN.



The four steps behind every plate search

1. **Clean up the plate.** Spaces, dashes and symbols are removed and letters are made uppercase, so “7abc-123” and “7ABC123” search the same way. CarCheckerVIN's search box does this for you.
2. **Match it in the issuing state’s registration data.** The search returns the VIN of the vehicle that plate is registered to, or was most recently registered to.
3. **Decode the VIN.** The 17 characters (standard since model year 1981 under 49 CFR Part 565) are translated into year, make, model, body, engine and plant using the manufacturer's data published by NHTSA.
4. **Gather records keyed to the VIN.** Title and brand records (including NMVTIS), odometer readings, insurance total-losses, liens and impounds, auction sales and recalls are all filed by VIN, not by plate. That's why the plate is only the first step.

Why you get vehicle data but not owner data

Registration files hold both: the vehicle's description and the registrant's name and address. The DPPA lets the vehicle side flow to ordinary users while the personal side is released only for the fourteen permitted uses in 18 U.S.C. § 2721(b) (Chapter 6b). A legitimate **VIN by license plate** service gives you the car and stops there.

TRY IT

Enter a plate and state at **carcheckervin.com/license-plate-lookup**. Copy the VIN it returns, compare it with the car, and open the free history preview. CarCheckerVIN also explains the process at **carcheckervin.com/plate-to-vin**.

WHY THE STATE MATTERS, AND WHY PLATE RESULTS GO STALE

Plates are issued state by state, and in most states they follow the owner rather than the car. Both facts shape how far you can trust a plate result.

The same characters, many states

No national registry hands out unique plate numbers. Each state runs its own system, so “ABC1234” can be on the road in several states at once, on different vehicles. That's why a license plate lookup asks for the issuing state. If the car in an ad wears an out-of-state plate, search under that state, not the state where it's for sale.

Why a plate can point at the wrong car

What happened	Effect on the plate search	What to do
The seller moved the plate to their next car (the rule in most states)	The plate is now registered to a different VIN	Compare the returned VIN with the car's dashboard VIN
The plate stayed with the car (California, Hawaii, Minnesota; Oregon if left on)	Right car, but the owner may have changed days ago	Fine for vehicle history; never assume the owner
Brand-new registration or new plate	Not yet in the data, so no match	Ask for the VIN, or read it off the car
Temporary tag or dealer plate	Not a normal registration record	Read the VIN printed on the temporary tag where the state requires it (Chapter 8b)
One character misread	No match, or a different car	Re-check the photo; try look-alike characters
Plate surrendered, expired or replaced	Old record or no result	Use the VIN from the car or the title

The golden rule: trust the VIN on the car

A plate is a removable piece of metal; the VIN is part of the vehicle. Check that the VIN a plate search returns matches the VIN on the dashboard and the door-jamb label. If they differ, the plate has moved since the record was made, or it isn't on the car it was issued to. Either way, run the history on the VIN you can physically see.

Where to find the VIN

Dashboard (through the windshield), driver's door jamb, title, registration card and insurance card. Every location is illustrated at **carcheckervin.com/where-is-the-vin-number-on-a-car**.

Mismatch = pause

A VIN that doesn't match the plate result isn't proof of fraud, but it is the moment to ask questions: when did the seller buy it, where are the plates from, and can they show the title?

CHAPTER 4

HOW TO LOOK UP A CAR BY PLATE, STEP BY STEP

Here is the full routine to **look up a car by plate**, from reading the plate correctly to deciding whether the car is worth your money. It takes a few minutes and costs nothing until the final step.

1. **Get a clean read of the plate.** Photograph it straight on, in shade if you can. In an online ad, zoom into the sharpest photo. Write down every character and the state name printed on the plate. If the plate is partly hidden, look for another photo before guessing.
2. **Identify the issuing state.** It's the state on the plate, not where the car is parked or advertised. Cars bought out of state, students' cars and recently moved owners often carry a different state's plate.
3. **Run the license plate lookup.** Enter the characters (no spaces or dashes) and select the state at carcheckervin.com/license-plate-lookup. The search returns the VIN of the vehicle registered to that plate.
4. **Read the decoded specs.** Year, make, model, engine and drive come back with the VIN. Do they match the ad and the car in front of you? A different model year or engine is your first red flag.
5. **Open the free history preview.** It shows which kinds of records exist for that VIN (title brands, odometer readings, total-loss, liens, auction sales) before you pay anything.
6. **Match the VIN to the car.** Compare the returned VIN with the dashboard, the door-jamb label and, when you meet the seller, the title and registration. All of them should be identical, character for character.
7. **Buy the full report before money changes hands.** CarCheckerVIN's report is $14.99. Add NHTSA's free recall search and NICB's free VINCheck, and book a pre-purchase inspection for anything you're serious about.

Reading a plate without mistakes

Unlike a VIN, which never uses the letters I, O or Q, a plate follows its own state's serial rules, so you can't rule letters out the same way. When a character is unclear, try the likely alternatives one at a time.

You see	It might be	Tip
`O`	`0 or D or Q`	Zeros are often narrower or slashed; compare with other zeros on the plate
`I`	`1 or L`	Look for the serif or foot that a 1 usually carries
`B`	`8`	A flat left side means B; two round loops mean 8
`S / Z / G`	`5 / 2 / 6`	Glare and dirt blur the corners first; use a second photo
Stacked small letters	Part of the plate number in some designs	Include them in order; if unsure, search with and without them

Got the VIN already?
Skip the plate. A VIN search is more precise because it can't be stale. Paste it into **carcheckervin.com/vin-lookup** for the same free decode and preview.

CHAPTER 4 CONT.

A WORKED EXAMPLE, AND WHAT TO DO WHEN NOTHING COMES BACK

To show how the pieces fit, here is a plate lookup traced from start to finish. The plate is made up for illustration; the VIN is a valid-format example decoded with NHTSA's vPIC database in November 2026.

WORKED EXAMPLE

The ad

"2015 F-150 XLT, 5.0 V8, 4×4, clean title, one owner." Photo shows plate **7ABC123** (illustrative).

The plate lookup returns

`1FTFW1ET9DFC10312`

The decode says

- Model year **2013** (10th character D)
- Ford F-150 pickup, 4WD
- **3.5-liter V6**, gasoline
- GVWR Class 2F (7,001–8,000 lb)
- Built in Dearborn, Michigan; check digit correct

What the example teaches

The ad says 2015 with a V8; the VIN says 2013 with a V6. That doesn't prove dishonesty (the seller may have mistyped, or the plate may have moved from another truck), but it changes the conversation. The next steps are the same every time: read the VIN on the truck's dashboard and door jamb, and if it matches the plate result, the ad is wrong about the truck. If it doesn't match, the plate belongs to another vehicle and the dashboard VIN is the one to check. Either way, run the history on the VIN you can see before you discuss price.

When the license plate search finds nothing

Likely reason	What to do
One character typed or read wrong	Re-read the photo; try the look-alike characters on page 8
Wrong issuing state selected	Check the state printed on the plate itself
New plate or new registration	Ask the seller for the VIN; it's on the registration card
Temporary tag or dealer plate	Read the VIN on the tag if the state prints it there, or on the dashboard
Vanity plate with symbols	Enter letters and numbers only; if still nothing, ask for the VIN
Expired or surrendered plate	Search by VIN at carcheckervin.com/vin-lookup
Non-U.S. plate	CarCheckerVIN searches U.S. plates only; use the VIN

A seller who won't share the VIN

Honest sellers share the VIN; it's printed on the dashboard for anyone to read through the windshield. If a seller refuses, a plate lookup can still get you the VIN, but treat the refusal as information, and check that car more carefully than any other on your list.

CHAPTER 5

AFTER THE PLATE: THE VIN CHECKS THAT MATTER

Once a plate lookup gives you the VIN, the real checking begins. Run these on any used car.

TITLE & BRAND RECORDS · FEDERAL DATABASE

NMVTIS title check

The National Motor Vehicle Title Information System is run by the U.S. Department of Justice (Bureau of Justice Assistance). An NMVTIS report shows the current title state and brand, brand history, the last odometer reading at titling, and total-loss, junk and salvage records. Approved data providers are listed at vehiclehistory.bja.ojp.gov; the DOJ notes consumers can't get NMVTIS reports from Carfax, DMVDesk or Experian. CarCheckerVIN reports include NMVTIS title records. More at **carcheckervin.com/nmvtis-vin-check** and **/salvage-title-check**.

MILEAGE

Odometer check

NHTSA estimates that more than 450,000 vehicles are sold each year with false odometer readings. Mileage in the history should only go up. Federal odometer disclosure doesn't apply to vehicles 20 years old or older, or of model year 2010 or older, so older cars may have fewer recorded readings. See **carcheckervin.com/odometer-check**.

FREE · NHTSA.GOV/RECALLS

Recall check by VIN or plate

NHTSA's recall lookup searches by VIN or by license plate and lists unrepaired safety recalls. It omits recalls over 15 years old (unless the maker offers more), some small or ultra-luxury makers, and very new recalls. Repairs are free at franchised dealers. See also **carcheckervin.com/recall-check**.

FREE · NICB.ORG/VINCHECK

NICB VINCheck

The National Insurance Crime Bureau's free VINCheck shows stolen-not-recovered vehicles and salvage or flood total-loss records reported by participating insurers, which write 92.49% of U.S. earned premium. It allows 5 searches per 24 hours per IP address, covers some motorcycles and watercraft, and NICB says it is not a full history report.

CARCHECKERVIN.COM · $14.99

Full vehicle history report

Title records and state brands (salvage, junk, rebuilt, flood, lemon buyback), NMVTIS title records, odometer readings, owner count, insurance total-loss records, lien history and impound information, auction sales with photos, service records, open recalls, factory specs and market value, ready in under a minute. Start at **carcheckervin.com/vehicle-history-report**.

CHAPTER 5 CONT.

VEHICLE HISTORY BY LICENSE PLATE: READING THE REPORT

A **vehicle history by license plate** search ends in a VIN-based report. Here is what each section means and when it should change your mind about a car.

Report section	Where the data comes from	What it can mean for you
Title brands	State title records, NMVTIS	Salvage, junk, rebuilt, flood or lemon buyback brands cut value and can limit insurance and resale
Title history	State title records	Frequent retitling across states can hide a brand (“title washing”)
Odometer readings	Titles, inspections, service and auction records	A reading lower than an earlier one is a rollback warning
Owner count	Title and registration events	“One owner” claims can be checked against it
Insurance total-loss	Insurer and NMVTIS reports	The car was declared a total loss at some point, even if the title looks clean today
Liens & impounds	Lien and impound records	An unreleased lien can mean the seller can't transfer a clear title
Auction sales	Auction listings, often with photos	Photos can show damage that was later repaired
Service records	Shops and dealers that report	Regular maintenance, or long gaps
Open recalls	NHTSA recall data	Unrepaired safety defects; free fixes at franchised dealers

Red flags worth walking away from

- A brand on the report that the seller didn't mention
- A total-loss record on a car advertised as “never damaged”
- Mileage that drops between two readings
- A title moved through several states in a short time
- An open lien and no lien release in the seller's hand
- Auction photos showing serious damage
- A VIN on the report that differs from the car's
- Several owners on a car sold as “one careful owner”

FROM A PLATE TO A REPORT

Plate lookup, VIN and free preview at **carcheckervin.com/license-plate-lookup**. Full report $14.99, or from $9 each in a 10-pack. See all prices at **carcheckervin.com/pricing**.

No report sees everything

A history report only shows events someone reported. A minor repair paid in cash may never appear. Use the report to rule cars out, and a mechanic's inspection to rule one in.

CHAPTER 6

LICENSE PLATE OWNER LOOKUP AND THE DPPA

The most common question after “what car is this?” is “who owns it?” The honest answer: the general public can't get that from a plate. A **license plate owner lookup** is controlled by federal law, and this chapter explains exactly how.

What the DPPA is

The **Driver's Privacy Protection Act of 1994** was enacted on September 13, 1994, as Title XXX of Public Law 103-322, and is codified at 18 U.S.C. §§ 2721–2725. Congress amended it in 1996, 1999 and 2000. It binds two groups: state departments of motor vehicles, which may not knowingly release personal information from motor vehicle records except as the law allows, and anyone else who obtains, discloses or uses that information.

Section	What it says, in plain English
§ 2721(a)	A state DMV and its employees and contractors must not knowingly disclose personal information from a motor vehicle record, except for the uses in subsection (b). Highly restricted information also needs the person's express consent, except for four of those uses.
§ 2721(b)	The fourteen permissible uses (listed on the next page).
§ 2721(c)	Someone who lawfully receives the information may resell or redisclose it only for a permitted use, and most resellers must keep records of every recipient and purpose for 5 years.
§ 2721(d)	A DMV may mail a copy of a request that doesn't fit an exception to the person it concerns, and release nothing unless that person waives their privacy.
§ 2722	It is unlawful to knowingly obtain or disclose personal information for a use that isn't permitted, or to make a false representation to get it.
§ 2723	Knowing violations are punishable by a criminal fine. A DMV with a policy or practice of substantial noncompliance faces a civil penalty of up to $5,000 a day.
§ 2724	The person whose information was misused can sue in federal court for actual damages but not less than $2,500 in liquidated damages, plus punitive damages for willful or reckless disregard, and attorney's fees.

Three definitions that decide everything

Motor vehicle record

Any record about a driver's license or permit, a title, a registration or an ID card issued by a motor vehicle department (§ 2725(1)). Plate records are registration records.

Personal information

Information identifying a person: photo, SSN, driver ID number, name, address (but not the 5-digit ZIP), phone, medical or disability information (§ 2725(3)).

Express consent

Consent in writing, which can be electronic with an electronic signature (§ 2725(5)). A vague “I agree” on a website doesn't make you a permitted user.

THE 14 PERMITTED USES IN THE DPPA

18 U.S.C. § 2721(b) lists the only reasons a state may release owner information from a motor vehicle record. Here they are, summarized in our own words; read the statute for the exact text.

(b)	Permitted use	Typical users
1	Government agencies, courts and police doing their jobs, or contractors acting for them	Police, courts, agency contractors
2	Vehicle safety and theft, emissions, recalls and advisories, monitoring of vehicles, parts and dealers, market research	Manufacturers sending recall notices, researchers
3	A business verifying details the person gave it, to prevent fraud or recover a debt	Lenders, businesses the person dealt with
4	Court and agency proceedings, service of process, litigation and court orders	Attorneys, process servers
5	Research and statistics, if nobody is contacted and nothing is published	Researchers
6	Insurers: claims investigation, anti-fraud, rating and underwriting	Insurance companies
7	Notifying owners of towed or impounded vehicles	Towing companies, impound lots
8	Licensed investigators, only for a purpose that is itself permitted	Licensed investigators
9	Employers checking a commercial driver's license holder	Trucking employers
10	Operating private toll roads	Private toll roads
11	Individual record requests, if the state has the person's express consent	Varies by state
12	Bulk surveys and marketing, if the state has express consent	Marketers (opt-in only)
13	Anyone holding the person's written consent	Anyone with written consent
14	Other uses the state's own law authorizes, tied to driving or public safety	Varies by state

Curiosity isn’t on the list

None of the fourteen lets the public get a stranger's name and address out of interest in a car or anger at a driver. Buying a car doesn't need it: the seller shows you the title and photo ID.

Investigators still need a reason

Use (8) covers licensed investigators only “for any purpose permitted under this subsection”. A license doesn't make an impermissible request permitted.

HOW LAWFUL OWNER-RECORD REQUESTS WORK

People with a permitted use don't search a website. They file a request with the state agency that holds the record, on that state's form, with identification and a stated purpose. Two large states show how it works.

CALIFORNIA DMV · FORM INF 70 (REV. 2/2023)

Request for Record Information

- A vehicle record is requested by **California plate number or VIN**.
- An automated record costs **$5**. The current record shows the registered owner's name, the legal owner's name and address, the vehicle description and registration status; an ownership history generally lists the current owner and the **three previous registered owners**.
- The requester must state a DPPA permitted use. California law (CVC § 1808.21) keeps residence addresses confidential except where a statute requires their release.
- **The owner is told.** CVC § 1810(b) requires the DMV to send the record subject a copy of the request. The requester's own address, phone number and license details are not passed on.
- Willful unauthorized disclosure, false representation or misuse is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to $5,000, up to one year in county jail, or both (CVC § 1808.45), on top of federal liability.

TEXAS DMV · FORM VTR-275

Request for Texas Motor Vehicle Information

- Searches by Texas plate, VIN or title document number; a copy of a government-issued photo ID is required.
- Fees: title history **$5.75**; certified title history $6.75; title and registration verification $2.30; certified verification for court use $3.30; duplicate registration receipt $2.00. Fees are not refundable.
- If you are not the owner or lienholder and have no written authorization, you must initial a permitted use. The applicant certifies use only under 18 U.S.C. §§ 2721–2725 and Texas Transportation Code Chapter 730.
- Falsifying information on the form is a third-degree felony under state law, as the form warns. More at carcheckervin.com/vtr-275.

California's forms by situation

Your situation (California)	Form named on INF 70
Your own driver or vehicle record	Proof of identity at a DMV field office, or form INF 1125 by mail
Lien sale, or disposing of a vehicle worth $500 or less	INF 1126, Registration Information Request for Lien Sale
Attorney in a vehicle-related case (crash, odometer rollback, lemon law)	INF 1161E, Attorney's Information Request (online)
Licensed dealer completing registration paperwork	INF 1120, Dealer Vehicle/Vessel Registration Information Request

Other states use their own forms and fees; check the motor vehicle agency in the state that issued the plate.

CHAPTER 6 CONT.

WHY OWNER-NAME PROMISES ARE A RED FLAG

Search for a license plate owner lookup and you'll find sites promising a name, address and phone number in seconds. Here is how to read those promises, and what to do instead.

Ask where the name would come from

Owner details in a state registration file can reach a third party only for a permitted use, and that party may pass them on only for a permitted use (§ 2721(c)). So a site selling owner names to anyone is in one of three positions: the data isn't really from DMV records (it may be stitched together from other sources, stale or wrong); it is DMV data redisclosed without a permitted use; or the site is asking *you* to claim a permitted use you don't have.

> **Ticking the box can make you the one breaking the law**
> Some checkout pages ask you to confirm a "permissible purpose" from a drop-down list. Under § 2722(b) it is unlawful to make a false representation to obtain personal information from a motor vehicle record, and § 2724 lets the person whose data was misused sue for at least $2,500 plus attorney's fees. Don't certify a reason that isn't true.

Red-flag checklist

- [ ] Promises an owner's name, address or phone number from a plate, to anyone
- [ ] Says "100% legal, no reason needed" or never mentions the DPPA
- [ ] Asks you to pick a permitted use from a list without explaining it
- [ ] A "free search" that becomes a recurring subscription at checkout
- [ ] "Instant owner results in all 50 states" despite state-by-state rules
- [ ] Results padded with relatives, social profiles or "possible" addresses

What to do instead

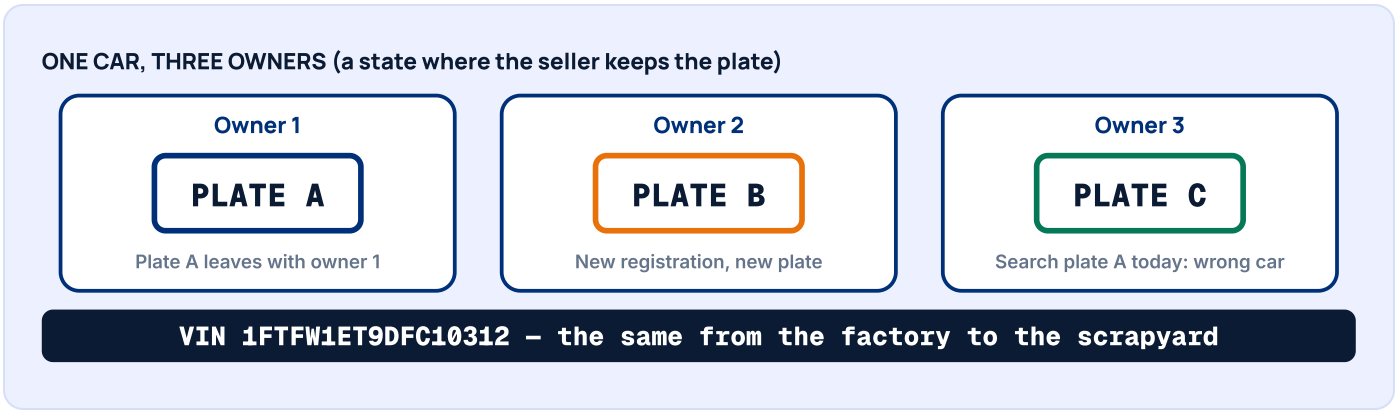
Your situation	The lawful route
Hit-and-run or road rage	Note the plate, state, make, model and color and report it to the police, who rely on permitted use (1). Tell your insurer, covered by use (6).
Car abandoned on your property	Contact local law enforcement or a licensed tow operator. Notifying owners of towed or impounded vehicles is permitted use (7).
Buying a car	You need the vehicle's history, not the owner's file. Ask to see the title and the seller's photo ID, and check that the names match.
Tickets or tolls after you sold a car	File your state's notice of sale or release of liability (California: REG 138). In Washington, removing your plates at the sale keeps tickets and tolls off your name.
A court case	Your attorney or process server requests the record under permitted use (4).

CarCheckerVIN returns vehicle information only: VIN, specs and history. Read more at **carcheckervin.com/vin-owner-lookup** and **/how-to-check-a-cars-ownership-history**.

CHAPTER 7

PLATES VS VINS: PLATES MOVE, VINS DON'T

A license plate identifies a registration for a while. A VIN identifies a vehicle for its whole life. Knowing the difference is what keeps a plate lookup honest.



	License plate	VIN
Issued by	The state motor vehicle agency	The manufacturer, under 49 CFR Part 565
Format	Set by each state; vanity plates chosen by the owner	17 characters since model year 1981; no I, O or Q
How long it lasts	Until replaced, surrendered or moved	The life of the vehicle
Moves when sold?	In most states it stays with the seller	Never
Unique?	Only within the issuing state	One VIN per vehicle
History filed under it	Registration events only	Titles, brands, odometer, total-loss, auctions, recalls

Who keeps the plate when a car is sold?

In the large majority of states the plate belongs to the owner, not the car: the seller takes it off and moves it to their next vehicle or surrenders it. That is the rule in Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Georgia, Michigan and many others. A few states do it the other way. In **California**, plates generally remain with the vehicle they were issued to; in **Hawaii**, no new plates are issued to a new owner; and in **Minnesota**, plates can't be moved to another vehicle, so the plate passes to the buyer. **Oregon** lets the seller choose: plates left on go to the buyer with the car. In **Alaska**, standard plates don't transfer at all; the buyer gets a new set.

What this means for a plate lookup

In a seller-keeps state, a plate on a car that was sold recently may already be registered to the seller's next car. In a plate-stays state, the plate shows the right car but tells you nothing about who owns it now. In both cases, check the result against the VIN on the vehicle.

STATE LICENSE PLATE LOOKUPS: HOW PLATES WORK IN 16 STATES

Plate rules are state law, so a **state license plate lookup** starts with that state's rules. Here are the ones that affect a lookup in 16 states.

State	Plate on sale	Plates	Registration & inspection
California	Stays with the car	2	Yearly; Smog Check in 33 counties, generally every other year
Texas	Seller keeps	2	Yearly; no safety inspection since Jan 1, 2025; emissions in 17 counties
Florida	Seller keeps	1	1 or 2 years, ending on the owner's birthday; no emissions test
New York	Seller keeps	2	Two-year registration; inspection every 12 months
Pennsylvania	Seller keeps	1	1 year (2-year option); yearly safety; emissions in 25 counties
Illinois	Owner keeps	2	Yearly; emissions every 2 years, Chicago and Metro-East
Ohio	Seller keeps	1	Birth month; 2–5 year terms too; E-Check in 7 counties
Georgia	Seller keeps	1	Yearly, birthday month; emissions in 13 metro Atlanta counties
North Carolina	Owner keeps	1	Yearly, after safety inspection; emissions in 19 counties
Michigan	Seller keeps	1	Yearly, on the owner's birthday
Arizona	Owner keeps (30 days)	1	1, 2 or 5 years; emissions in Phoenix and Tucson areas
Washington	Seller must remove	2	Yearly tabs; emissions checks ended Jan 1, 2020
Minnesota	Stays with the car	2	Yearly; emissions testing repealed March 1, 2000
Virginia	Seller must surrender	2	Yearly; safety yearly; emissions in Northern Virginia
New Jersey	Owner keeps	2	Yearly; inspection every 2 years, new cars exempt to year 5
Hawaii	Stays with the car	2	Yearly, by county; safety check every 12 months

“Plates” = plates issued for a passenger car. Summarized from each state's agency pages or statutes (see the back page); fees omitted. Rules change, so confirm with the agency before relying on one.

Plates that name their county

Idaho standard plates open with a county designator, a number-and-letter code for the county of registration. Every Wyoming plate begins with a county prefix number: 1 is Natrona County, running up to 23 for Sublette County. On those plates, the characters alone tell you where the car is registered.

Run a state plate lookup

Each state has a page with its rules and the plate search built in: **California**, **Texas**, **Florida**, **New York**, **Pennsylvania**, **Illinois**, **Ohio**, **Georgia**, **North Carolina**, **Michigan**, **Arizona**, **Washington**, **Minnesota**, **Virginia**, **New Jersey** and **Hawaii**. Other states follow the same pattern: /license-plate-lookup/*state-name*.

CHAPTER 8

VANITY, SPECIALTY AND DEALER PLATES

Not every plate is a standard serial number. Here is how the common plate types behave when you search them.



Standard plate
A state-assigned serial. The easiest to search, as long as you pick the right state.



Vanity / personalized
The owner picks the characters. Spaces, hyphens or symbols may be part of the design.



Specialty / cause plate
A different design for a cause, school or group. Same registration record underneath.



Dealer plate
Belongs to the dealership and moves between cars it has for sale.



Temporary tag
Short-term registration after a sale. Several states print the VIN on it (page 19).



Same plate, two states
Identical characters can be issued by different states. Always set the issuing state.

Vanity plates: each state sets its own limits

State	What a personalized plate may contain
California	Called Environmental License Plates; 2 to 7 characters
New York	Up to 8 characters on most passenger plates; a space or hyphen counts as one
Massachusetts	2 to 6 characters, starting with at least two letters; numbers only at the end
Colorado	Only 5 characters (3 on a motorcycle); spaces, dashes and periods count
Texas	Letters, numbers, spaces and symbols such as hearts, stars and state silhouettes
North Carolina	Up to 8 spaces on a personal vehicle; ?, &, $ and @ are allowed

For a lookup: you can't type a heart or a star. Enter the letters and numbers in order; if nothing matches, get the VIN from the car. **Specialty plates** are everywhere (Arizona's budget committee counted 90 special plate types in November 2025, and North Carolina offers plates for more than 100 causes), but the design doesn't change the registration record. **Dealer plates** identify the dealer, not a car: Florida, for example, makes dealer plates valid on dealer-owned vehicles in inventory and for sale. Read the VIN instead. Florida vanity plates have a search at **carcheckervin.com/florida-vanity-license-plate-search**, and dealer plates are explained at **/dealer-plates**.

TEMPORARY TAGS AND PAPER PLATES

A car fresh from a sale often wears a temporary tag. Temporary tags usually don't show up in a plate search, but in several states the tag itself tells you the VIN.

State	How temporary registration works	What's printed on the tag
Texas	Since July 1, 2025 (House Bill 718), dealers issue metal plates at the sale; paper buyer tags are no longer printed. Counties issue metal 30-day plates ($25 plus a $4.75 processing fee) and one-trip plates.	Metal plate; check the buyer's receipt
Maryland	A dealer's temporary plate lasts up to 60 days, one per vehicle, mounted on the rear.	Issue and expiry dates, make and **VIN** (Transp. § 13-604)
Virginia	A dealer's temporary registration lasts no more than 30 days before an extension is needed.	Dealer name, dates, make and **VIN** (Va. Code § 46.2-1562)
Arizona	A dealer's temporary plate is void after 45 days or when the permanent plate or tab arrives (A.R.S. § 28-4551).	Dates, make and **VIN**; the buyer's name and address must not be readable from outside (§ 28-4550)
Florida	The standard term is 30 days (other lengths for specific uses); $2 a tag plus a $2.50 service charge per transaction.	–
California	A dealer's temporary plates let the car run until the permanent plates arrive, or up to 90 days from the sale.	–

How to check a temporary tag

1. **Read the dates.** An expired tag means the registration never got finished, which can point to a title or lien problem.
2. **Match the VIN.** Where the state prints it (Maryland, Virginia and Arizona, above), the VIN on the tag must match the dashboard and door jamb. A tag made for another car is a serious warning.
3. **Know your state's format.** A paper Texas buyer's tag on a car today is a red flag: paper buyer tags stopped being printed on July 1, 2025, and ones issued before that only lasted until they expired. TxDMV's own example: a tag issued June 30, 2025 expired August 29, 2025.
4. **Run the VIN, not the tag.** Put the VIN through **carcheckervin.com/vin-lookup**, then buy the report before you pay.

> **Why fake temporary tags exist**
> Counterfeit paper tags let a car be driven without real registration, insurance or inspection. A car riding on a questionable tag may have a title it can't transfer. Ask for the dealer's or seller's paperwork, and walk away if it doesn't add up.

Temporary tag rules by state, with costs and durations: **carcheckervin.com/temporary-tag**, plus **Texas**, **Florida**, **Virginia**, **Arizona** and **Maryland**.

CHAPTER 9

CARFAX LICENSE PLATE LOOKUP VS CARCHECKERVIN

Carfax is the best-known name in vehicle history, and its site lets you start from a plate. Here is how a **Carfax license plate lookup** compares with CarCheckerVIN and the free tools.

CARFAX LICENSE PLATE LOOKUP

Carfax

Carfax, Inc. was founded in 1984 in Virginia and is part of S&P Global Mobility. Besides VIN search, it offers a license plate search that leads into its paid report, widely quoted at **$44.99** for a single report. Its strength is service and maintenance records. Many dealers include a free Carfax (the dealer pays); AAA Premier members get one free Carfax a year by phone, and Classic and Plus members a discount that varies by club. Its **Buyback Guarantee** pays when a report missed a DMV-issued title brand; it doesn't cover accidents, has deadlines and caps the payout.

CARCHECKERVIN.COM

CarCheckerVIN license plate lookup

A free plate-to-VIN search for all 50 states and DC, a free decode and a free history preview, so you can see whether title brands, odometer readings, total-loss, lien or auction records exist before paying. The full report is **$14.99**, or $12, $11 or $9 each in 3-, 5- and 10-packs. Compare at **carcheckervin.com/carfax-license-plate-lookup**.

	Carfax	CarCheckerVIN
Start from a license plate	Yes	Yes, free, 50 states + DC
Single report price	Widely quoted at $44.99	$14.99
Free preview before buying	–	Yes, no credit card
Multi-report packs	–	3, 5 or 10 reports, from $9 each
Title brands	Yes (backed by its Buyback Guarantee)	Yes, with NMVTIS title records
Odometer readings	–	Yes
Service records	Yes (its strength)	Yes
Auction sales with photos	–	Yes
Owner names from a plate	No	No (DPPA)

"–" means we couldn't confirm it from a source we could open, not that the feature is missing. Carfax's site blocks automated checks, so its price is given as widely quoted.

When a Carfax makes sense: the dealer gives you one free, or you mainly want maintenance history. **When CarCheckerVIN makes sense:** you're starting from a plate in an ad, comparing several cars, or want title, total-loss and auction records for less: a 5-pack costs less than two Carfax reports.

CHAPTER 10

USING A PLATE LOOKUP WHEN BUYING FROM A LISTING

Online car ads often show the plate long before anyone mentions the VIN. A plate lookup lets you check a car from your sofa, before you spend a Saturday driving to see it.

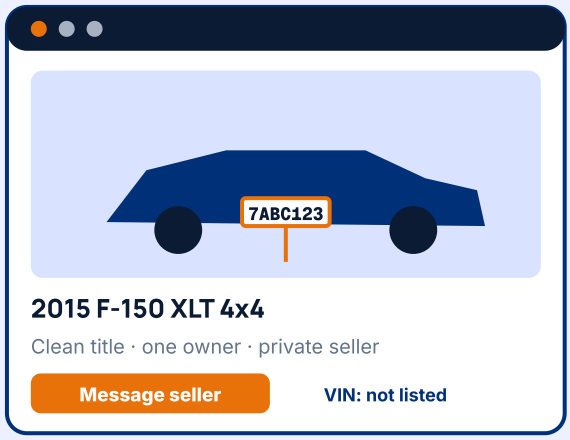


Illustration: a listing that shows the plate but not the VIN.

Before you travel

1. Message the seller and ask for the VIN. Many will simply send it.
2. If they won't, read the plate from the photos and run it at carcheckervin.com/license-plate-lookup.
3. Compare the decode with the ad: year, model, engine, drive.
4. Check the free preview for title brands, total-loss and auction records.
5. Shortlisted? Buy the $14.99 report, then go and see it.

Check the ad's claims against the record

The ad says	Check it against	Red flag if
Year, model, trim, engine	The VIN decode	Any of them differs
"Low miles"	Odometer readings in the report	An older reading is higher than the dash
"Clean title"	Title brands and NMVTIS records	Salvage, rebuilt, flood or junk anywhere in the history
"One owner"	Owner count in the report	More than one owner on record
"Never damaged"	Total-loss records and auction photos	A total-loss record or damage photos
Location	Plate state and title history	Recent moves through several states

Three scams a plate-and-VIN check helps expose

VIN cloning: a stolen car wears a copy of a legitimate car's VIN, so a plate or VIN search returns the honest twin. Look for tampered VIN plates or labels, VINs that differ between the dashboard and door, and run NICB's VINCheck. **Title washing:** a branded car is re-titled in another state to shed the brand; brand history in NMVTIS records follows the VIN (more at carcheckervin.com/title-washing). **Curbstoning:** unlicensed dealers posing as private sellers; the name on the title won't match the seller's ID.

CHAPTER 10 CONT.

MEETING THE SELLER: PLATE, PAPERS AND VIN MUST AGREE

When you see the car in person, everything you found online has to line up with the metal and the paperwork. Use this checklist before any money changes hands.

At the car

- [ ] The plate on the car matches the plate in the ad photos.
- [ ] The state on the plate matches the registration card.
- [ ] The dashboard VIN matches the door-jamb label and the plate-lookup result.
- [ ] VIN labels and plates show no scratches, loose rivets or stickers over them.
- [ ] On a temporary tag, the printed VIN (where the state requires it) matches the car.
- [ ] The odometer shows at least the last reading in the report.

In the paperwork

- [ ] The VIN on the title and registration matches the car, character for character.
- [ ] The seller's photo ID matches the name on the title.
- [ ] Any brand on the title matches the history report.
- [ ] A lien in the report comes with a lien release, or a payoff plan you trust.
- [ ] The seller can explain any total-loss or auction record.
- [ ] You have a bill of sale with the VIN, price, date and both signatures.

BEFORE YOU PAY

Buy the full report on the VIN you've just seen on the car, not only the one the ad gave you: **carcheckervin.com/vehicle-history-report**. Private-sale checklists: **carcheckervin.com/buying-a-used-car-from-a-private-seller** and **/bill-of-sale**.

After you buy: what happens to the plates

The plate follows the owner in most states, so plan how you'll drive the car home:

- **Texas:** the seller removes the plates and registration sticker. The buyer can print a free Vehicle Transit Permit (5 calendar days, one trip) or buy a 30-day temporary plate at the county tax office. A seller not reusing the plates may deface their front with permanent black ink.
- **Florida, New York, Georgia and Pennsylvania:** the seller keeps the plate. In Florida, that means the buyer needs a temporary tag or permanent plates before driving.
- **California, Hawaii and Minnesota:** the plates generally stay on the car; the buyer still has to transfer the registration into their own name.
- **Washington:** the seller must remove the plates; that is what keeps later tolls, parking and camera tickets off the seller's record.

Selling? Protect yourself too

Take your plates off (where your state says so), file your state's notice of sale or release of liability, and keep a copy of the bill of sale. A plate left on a sold car can keep linking you to it.

CHAPTER 11

OTHER REASONS PEOPLE RUN A PLATE, AND THE RIGHT TOOL FOR EACH

Buying a car is the most common reason to run a license plate lookup, but not the only one. Here are the others, with what you can do lawfully in each case.

Checking your own car for recalls

NHTSA's recall lookup at nhtsa.gov/recalls accepts your plate as well as your VIN and lists unrepaired safety recalls. Repairs are free at franchised dealers. Check again every few months: new recalls are added all the time. CarCheckerVIN's **recall check** works by VIN.

Before you sell

Run your own car's history so you know what a buyer will see. If there's an old total-loss or a lien that was paid off, have the paperwork ready. Sharing the VIN up front reassures cautious buyers.

A car hit yours and drove off

Write down the plate, state, make, model, color and direction of travel, take photos if it's safe, and report it to the police and your insurer. Both can request the owner's record under the DPPA (permitted uses 1 and 6). Don't go looking for the driver yourself.

An abandoned car on your property

Call local law enforcement or a licensed tow operator; owner notices for towed and impounded vehicles are a permitted use. In California, lien-sale requests go on form INF 1126.

Lost your VIN?

Your registration card and insurance card both show it. If they're not handy, a plate lookup on your own plate returns it, as long as the plate is still registered to that car.

Dealers and fleets

Trade-ins often arrive with plates still on. A plate search confirms the VIN fast; for volume, CarCheckerVIN offers wholesale pricing, bulk API access and white-label reports at **carcheckervin.com/dealers**.

Tell a friend

Refer someone who's buying a car and get a free report: **carcheckervin.com/refer**.

Quick guide: what to use when

You want to know…	Use
What car a plate belongs to	Free plate lookup at carcheckervin.com/license-plate-lookup
Whether it has open recalls	NHTSA recall lookup (VIN or plate), free
Whether it's reported stolen	NICB VINCheck (free, 5 searches a day) and the police
Its title brands, mileage, total-loss, liens and auctions	CarCheckerVIN full report, $14.99
Who owns it	Not available to the public; police, insurers and courts use DPPA permitted uses

REFERENCE

LICENSE PLATE LOOKUP GLOSSARY

Buyback Guarantee
Carfax's payout when its report missed a DMV-issued title brand; capped, excludes accidents.

Curbstoning
An unlicensed dealer selling cars while posing as a private seller.

Dealer plate
A plate issued to a dealership for vehicles in its inventory, not to a specific car.

DPPA
Driver's Privacy Protection Act of 1994, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2721–2725.

Express consent
Written consent, including electronic consent with an electronic signature (§ 2725(5)).

Highly restricted personal information
A person's photo or image, Social Security number, and medical or disability information (§ 2725(4)).

Issuing state
The state that issued a plate; required for any plate search.

License plate lookup
A search that uses a plate and state to identify the registered vehicle and its VIN.

Lien
A lender's legal claim on a vehicle until a loan is repaid; recorded on the title.

Motor vehicle record
A DMV record of a license, permit, title, registration or ID card (§ 2725(1)).

NHTSA
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: runs the VIN rule, vPIC and the recall lookup.

NICB VINCheck
The National Insurance Crime Bureau's free theft and total-loss lookup by VIN.

NMVTIS
National Motor Vehicle Title Information System, run by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Permitted (permissible) use
One of the fourteen reasons in 18 U.S.C. § 2721(b) for which a state may release personal information.

Personal information
Information identifying a person, such as name, address, phone or driver ID number (§ 2725(3)).

Plate to VIN
Resolving a license plate to the VIN of the vehicle registered to it.

Release of liability
A seller's notice to the state that a vehicle has been sold (California: REG 138).

Specialty plate
A plate with a special design for a cause, school or group; same registration underneath.

Temporary tag
Short-term registration after a sale; some states print the VIN on it.

Title brand
A permanent title notation such as salvage, rebuilt, flood, junk or lemon buyback.

Title washing
Re-titling a branded vehicle in another state to remove the brand from the paper title.

Validation tab
The sticker or decal showing a plate's registration is current.

Vanity plate
A personalized plate with characters chosen by the owner, within state limits.

VIN
Vehicle Identification Number: 17 characters, model year 1981 onward; permanent.

VIN cloning
Putting a legitimate vehicle's VIN on a stolen one to disguise it.

Vehicle history report
A dated record of a vehicle's titles, mileage, total-losses and more.

Vehicle Transit Permit
Texas's free 5-day, one-trip permit for a buyer when the seller keeps the plates.

vPIC
NHTSA's free VIN decoding database and API.

ANSWERS

LICENSE PLATE LOOKUP FAQ

Is a license plate lookup free?

The plate-to-VIN search and decode are free at carcheckervin.com/license-plate-lookup, with a free history preview. The full history report is $14.99.

Can I find a VIN by license plate?

Yes. Enter the plate and issuing state; the search returns the VIN of the vehicle registered to that plate. Confirm it against the VIN on the car.

Can I find the owner of a car by license plate?

Not as a member of the public. The DPPA (18 U.S.C. § 2721) restricts owner names and addresses to fourteen permitted uses, such as police, courts and insurers.

Is it legal to look up a license plate?

Yes, for vehicle information: the VIN, specs and history. Obtaining owner information without a permitted use, or lying to get it, is unlawful under 18 U.S.C. § 2722.

What does a license plate search show?

The VIN, year, make, model and engine, and through the VIN a car's title brands, odometer readings, total-loss, liens, auctions and recalls.

Does Carfax have a license plate lookup?

Yes, Carfax offers a plate search leading into its report, widely quoted at $44.99. CarCheckerVIN's plate search is free and its report is $14.99.

Can a plate lookup tell me if a car is stolen?

Use NICB's free VINCheck with the VIN, and report a suspected stolen car to the police.

Is there a free license plate lookup by state?

Yes. Each state has its own page, such as carcheckervin.com/license-plate-lookup/texas.

Are owner-lookup websites legit?

Be wary of any site promising names and addresses to anyone. Lawful owner records come from the state agency, for a permitted use.

Can I check recalls by license plate?

Yes. NHTSA's recall lookup at nhtsa.gov/recalls searches by VIN or plate, free. Recall repairs are free at franchised dealers.

Why does my plate lookup show the wrong car?

In most states plates follow the owner, so the plate may now be on the seller's next car. A typo or the wrong state does the same. Trust the VIN on the car.

Why does a plate search return nothing?

The plate may be new, temporary, a dealer plate, expired or misread. Ask for the VIN or read it through the windshield.

Can I look up a temporary tag?

Usually not as a plate. But Maryland, Virginia and Arizona require the VIN to be printed on dealer temporary tags; run that VIN instead.

Do license plates stay with the car when it's sold?

In most states, no: the seller keeps them. California, Hawaii and Minnesota are exceptions where plates generally stay with the car.

Can I get vehicle history by license plate?

Yes. The plate gives you the VIN, and the history report is built on the VIN: title, odometer, total-loss, liens, auctions, recalls.

How do police look up a plate?

Through government records systems; law enforcement use is DPPA permitted use (1).

Can I look up a plate from another state?

Yes. Select the state printed on the plate; CarCheckerVIN covers all 50 states and DC.

Where do I buy a report after a plate lookup?

At carcheckervin.com: preview free, then $14.99, or from $9 each in packs.

FREE LICENSE PLATE LOOKUP

From a plate to the full story.

Enter a plate and state to get the VIN, year, make and model free, plus a free preview of the vehicle's history. Full report $14.99.

carcheckervin.com/license-plate-lookup →

Scan to look up a plate free

Sources

- Driver's Privacy Protection Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2721–2725 (law.cornell.edu)
- California DMV, form INF 70, Request for Record Information, Rev. 2/2023 (dmv.ca.gov)
- Texas DMV, form VTR-275, Request for Texas Motor Vehicle Information (txdmv.gov)
- TxDMV, House Bill 718 Implementation and Temporary Registration (txdmv.gov)
- Md. Transportation § 13-604 (mgaleg.maryland.gov); Va. Code § 46.2-1562 (law.lis.virginia.gov); A.R.S. §§ 28-4550, 28-4551 (azleg.gov)
- Fla. Stat. §§ 320.131, 320.04, 320.13; Cal. Veh. Code § 4456; Va. Code § 46.2-1542; Md. Transp. §§ 13-602, 13-605
- State plate transfer, plate count, vanity and registration rules: the 16 states' motor vehicle agencies and statutes (e.g. dmv.ca.gov, txdmv.gov, revisor.mn.gov, capitol.hawaii.gov)
- 49 CFR Part 565, VIN requirements; NHTSA vPIC decoder (vpic.nhtsa.dot.gov), 1 VIN decoded Nov 2026
- NHTSA recalls (nhtsa.gov/recalls); NHTSA odometer fraud data; 49 U.S.C. Chapter 327
- NICB VINCheck (nicb.org/vincheck); U.S. DOJ / BJA, NMVTIS (vehiclehistory.bja.ojp.gov)
- Carfax price: independent pricing listings, 2026; CarCheckerVIN prices: carcheckervin.com/pricing, Nov 2026

How we made this guide: written by CarCheckerVIN with AI assistance, from the public sources listed above; figures, prices and links checked November 2026.

More free tools at carcheckervin.com

VIN lookup · **VIN decoder** · **Plate to VIN**

Recall check · **Free VIN check** · **NMVTIS VIN check**

Carfax license plate lookup · **Temporary tags** · **Vehicle history report**

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