



Driver and Vehicle
Licensing Agency

INF46

Registration Numbers and You

For further information go to: www.direct.gov.uk/motoring



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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1. Introduction

Are you looking for a special registration number or do you already have one on your vehicle? YES!! then read on and find out more.

If, after reading this booklet, you want any further information, please contact:

DVLA – Customer Enquiries (Vehicles) on **0870 240 0010** between 8.00am and 8.30pm Monday to Friday and between 8.00am and 5.30pm Saturday. Some calls will be monitored for quality and training purposes.

Customers with impaired hearing who have a text phone/ minicom should phone 01792 782756. (You should be aware that the minicom will not respond to ordinary telephones).

Alternatively, the DVLA Website address is <http://www.dvla.gov.uk> or you can e-mail at vehicles.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk

Information can also be obtained from your nearest DVLA local office. The **address** of your nearest DVLA Local Office can be found in booklet V100 – Registering and Licensing your Vehicle, which is available from all post offices. The **telephone number** of your nearest office can be found in The Phone Book under “Driving and Vehicles (Vehicle Registration and Licensing)”.

2. New registration format

A new registration mark format was introduced on 1 September 2001 for all new vehicles being registered. The new format consists of 2 letters, 2 numbers, space and 3 further letters. The first two letters denote the office where the mark was first issued, the two numbers are the age identifier, continuing to change every six months and the last three letters are the random element.



Details of the local memory tags and age identifiers can be found on the DVLA website or the information leaflet INF104 “Vehicle Number Plates are changing”, available from your nearest Local Office and DVLA, Swansea.

3. Display of registration numbers

Registration numbers must be correctly displayed in accordance with the regulations governing the design, manufacture and display of vehicle registration number plates.

It is an **offence** to mis-space or mis-represent registrations on number plates or to use fixing bolts to obliterate or enhance any of the characters to corrupt numbers to appear as letters or vice versa. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of up to £1,000 and vehicles with illegally displayed number plates will fail the MOT test. You should also be aware that in some cases, the registration number may be withdrawn permanently from use. In such cases, if the original assignment rights to the number being misrepresented were purchased from the Agency's sales scheme, you would not be entitled to any reimbursement of the monies or any other costs incurred in the purchase of those rights. More information on spacing can be found in leaflet **V796 Display of Registration Marks** obtainable from your nearest DVLA Local Office or DVLA, Swansea.

4. What is a registration number and who has entitlement to it?

Registration numbers are not items of property in their own right. They are assigned, and may be withdrawn, by the Secretary of State as part of the basic registration and licensing process which is required by law. The registration number is a unique means of identifying a vehicle, primarily for taxation and law enforcement purposes. It is assigned **to the vehicle**, rather than its keeper, and unless it is transferred or retained the registration number normally remains with the vehicle until it is broken up, destroyed or sent permanently out of the country.

An individual acquires limited entitlement to a registration number when he or she becomes the registered keeper of the vehicle which carries the number. When the vehicle changes hands, entitlement to its registration number will automatically pass with the vehicle to the new keeper unless use is made beforehand of the special facilities which have been designed to allow motorists to acquire and retain particular registration numbers.

These facilities, the **Cherished Transfer, Retention and Sale of Marks schemes**, are outlined in this booklet.

5. Where can I buy a personalised registration number?

The DVLA has its own sales scheme offering a unique range of distinctive and individual registrations which have never previously been issued.

DVLA's service, whether through its dedicated Select Registration Hotline or through one of its Classic Collection and Custom Marks auction is designed to make your purchase a simple and enjoyable experience.



DVLA Select Registrations offers a huge choice of millions of registrations at affordable prices. Prices which start from £250 even include VAT and

the Agency's Assignments Fee. Choose from a certain prefix letter, add one of our attractive range of figure combinations and then just round your registration off with just about any combination of three letters. With the introduction of our new style registrations the choice is now even greater. Visit our web site www.dvla-som.co.uk where our on-line search facility enables you to check availability and prices of all DVLA's Select Registrations. Then when you are ready to buy just ring the DVLA's Registration Hotline on **0870 6000 142** – lines are open from 9.00am until 5.00pm Monday to Friday and 9.00am until 1.00pm Saturday.



The flagship of DVLA's sales scheme, DVLA Classic Collection auctions offers the ultimate in personalised registrations. Exclusive and attractive, they are offered for sale at prestigious venues around the country. DVLA

Classic Collection auctions include many registrations which are dateless. They also include registrations with a prefix or suffix age identifying letter that represents names and words. We hold about six two day sales a year, each containing about eight hundred registrations.



If your preferred choice of registration number falls outside the scope of the DVLA Select Registrations and DVLA Classic Collection scheme and

it has not previously been issued, then we may offer it for sale through our DVLA Custom Marks auctions. DVLA Custom Marks auctions include registrations with a prefix or suffix age identifying letter, together with certain figure combinations. They also include registrations which are dateless.

Prices achieved at DVLA Custom Marks auctions are likely to be considerably lower than those at our Classic Collection auctions. We hold about two one day sales a year each containing about six hundred registrations.

Full details of each auction are advertised in the national and appropriate regional press prior to each sale. If you would like more information about DVLA's auctions or wish to join our mailing list then drop a line to DVLA Sale of Marks (Marketing), Swansea SA99 1DN.

Further information about DVLA's Sale of Marks scheme, including a full listing of numbers for forthcoming auctions, as well as the prices of previously sold auction numbers can be found on our web site www.dvla-som.co.uk

Please note registration numbers purchased under the Sale of Marks scheme can only be assigned to vehicles registered or about to be registered, licensed and used in Great Britain and cannot be used to make a vehicle appear younger than it actually is.

6. What do I get from the Agency for my money?

Registration numbers are not items of property so you cannot buy legal title to them. What you pay for through DVLA's sales scheme is the **assignment right** to the particular number. The sale involves a legally binding contract between the Secretary of State and the purchaser for an agreed price. The purchaser is granted the

right to assign the number to a vehicle registered in his/her own name, or that of his/her nominee where applicable, within a 12 month period.

The assignment right is granted to the purchaser alone **and the right cannot be transferred to anyone else – the nominee has no rights to the number.**

The agreed sale price includes the assignment fee (currently £80). Buyers are issued with a V750 Certificate of Entitlement, valid for 12 months, which records details of the registration number, the purchaser and nominee details where supplied at the time of purchase, and expiry date. If, after you have received your certificate, you wish to add or change nominee details, you will need to apply to DVLA, returning your certificate together with a fee of £25 – for more details please see section 18 of this booklet.

If you do not wish to assign the number within the 12 month period, you can apply to extend your assignment rights annually. There will be a charge of £25 for each extension. NB If you allow your right to lapse, the purchase monies are not refundable.

More details about this can be found on the Certificate itself, and further on in this booklet. The Certificate also explains what you need to do when you are ready to have the number assigned. Numbers can only be assigned to vehicles which are registered or being registered in GB, are subject to testing and are currently licensed or are being licensed at the time of assignment

REMEMBER: A nominee has no rights under the sales agreement – the assignment right is granted to the purchaser only and cannot be transferred.

Only the purchaser can apply to have the number assigned, and it can only be assigned to a vehicle registered to the purchaser, or to the nominee shown on the Certificate of Entitlement.

Once you have assigned the number to your, or your nominee's vehicle, you have fully exercised your rights under the terms of your contract with the Secretary of State. After assignment, entitlement to the number comes through being the keeper of the vehicle which has received it. Only the keeper is entitled to apply for retention or transfer of the number – see also sections 4, 10, and 15 of this booklet.

Please note that if the number is being assigned to a vehicle which is already registered, its existing number will become void unless an application to transfer or retain that number is made at the same time – see sections 15 and 22.

7. Where else can I obtain a registration number?

If you are interested in having a registration number which is already in circulation you will find private and trade advertisements in the National Press or Specialist Magazines.

Dealers in personalised numbers may offer for sale assigned numbers which are from their “stock” or may act as agent for the motorist who wishes to sell the number of his vehicle. In either case, the movement of the number from one vehicle to another can only be achieved through **DVLA's Cherished Transfer** or **Retention facilities** (*see section 15 of this leaflet*). Dealers may also act for you in obtaining a previously unissued number from DVLA Sales Scheme, and you can expect to pay them for their services.

The Cherished Number Dealers Association is a trade association of certain registration number dealers affiliated to the Retail Motor Industry Federation. The Association has set standards of trading which include providing for their customers' written terms and conditions of business.

Members of the Association can be identified by the CNDA logo on their advertisements. If you would like more information about the services offered by the CNDA or a list of its members you can write to the Director, CNDA, RMIF, 3rd Floor, 9 North Street, Rugby, CV21 2AB or telephone the helpline on 01788 538302.

8. What do I get from the seller for my money?

Vehicle Registration numbers are not items of property, so you cannot buy legal title to them. When you “buy” an assigned number, therefore, what you are actually paying for is the agreement of the registered keeper of the vehicle which carries the number to apply to DVLA to transfer it from his/her vehicle to yours under the **Cherished Transfer** facility. Once the number has been transferred to your vehicle, you then acquire the entitlement (as the registered keeper of the vehicle) to apply to transfer or retain the number.

9. What if I have a special number on my vehicle and I want to rebuild it or convert it to a kit?

Not all registration numbers are transferable. Check your registration document first. If it is transferable, you should secure it **before** carrying out any alterations/conversions, in case entitlement to the number is lost (see section 15). For further information see **INF26** “The Registration of Rebuilt or Radically Altered Vehicles and Kit Cars”.

10. How can I safeguard my entitlement to a registration number?

Entitlement to a number is effectively the right of the registered keeper of a vehicle to *apply* to have the number transferred to another vehicle (either his own or someone else's).

The keeper is also entitled to *apply* to have the number of his vehicle put on retention, that is to say, take the number off the

vehicle **and** put it on hold pending re-assignment to another vehicle. It is important to note that although the keeper may apply, the application will only be granted if all the conditions relating to the retention and transfer facilities are satisfied. You can help to safeguard your entitlement, by ensuring that your vehicle is able to meet these conditions. You will find more information about the conditions in section 15 of this leaflet.

If you no longer have the vehicle which properly displays the number (ie it is in someone else's keepership or has been scrapped, broken up, destroyed or exported) then your entitlement to the number ceases.

11. What if my vehicle is leased?

Please be aware that if you transfer or assign a number to a leased vehicle, you will have NO entitlement to that number if the vehicle is registered to the leasing company. Since entitlement to a registration number rests with the vehicle's registered keeper, only the leasing company would have the right to apply to transfer or retain the number. If you still wish to transfer or assign a number to a leased vehicle, check with the leasing company first that they have no objections to you doing so and that they are prepared to co-operate on your behalf in any subsequent movement of the number from their vehicle.

12. What if my vehicle is stolen and not recovered?



If your vehicle is stolen and has not been recovered after a year, you can apply to have its registration number re-assigned to your replacement vehicle, providing certain conditions are met. In order to qualify for the concession, the theft must have been notified to the police and recorded at DVLA as stolen for not less than 12 months.

In addition, at the time of the theft the vehicle must have had a current test pass certificate and have had a current vehicle excise licence (tax disc). The DVLA will also require a letter from your insurers confirming that they have no objection to the number being re-issued. This must be provided because once insurers have settled your claim, they have a rightful claim to the vehicle should it be recovered. Please also read section 13.

To apply, or for further information, write quoting the registration number to **Cherished Transfer Section**, D16, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Swansea SA99 1BW. If you wish to telephone, DVLA's Customer Enquiries number is 0870 240 0010.

13. What if my vehicle is “written off”?

A vehicle is “written off” when it is judged by insurers to be beyond economical repair. In such a case, the insurance company agrees a pay-out with the insured, and legal ownership of the vehicle then passes to the insurance company. The company is then free to sell the vehicle as salvage and the purchaser may repair it and put it back on the road.

If your vehicle is written off, you may still apply to transfer or retain its number **providing:**

- your insurers have not disposed of the vehicle *and*
- the vehicle is available for inspection *and*
- you can satisfy all the conditions of the transfer or retention schemes (see section 15).

IMPORTANT: It is essential that you discuss your personalised registration number with your insurers at the outset. You will need to ensure they are aware that in the event of a write-off, the vehicle must be made available for inspection by DVLA if you are to transfer or retain the number. If your insurers settle your claim and sell the vehicle as salvage before the number is properly transferred or retained, the mark will pass with the vehicle to the new keeper and you will lose your entitlement. You will also lose entitlement if the vehicle is sent for scrapping before the number is transferred or retained (see section 14).

Once you have successfully transferred or retained your registration number from the written off vehicle, let your insurers know about the change of number and send them the amended **V5** registration document. If your insurers intend to sell the write-off as salvage, the vehicle must display the replacement registration number.



14. What if my vehicle has been scrapped?

Scrapping occurs when a vehicle, whether an insurance write-off or not, is broken up for spares or otherwise destroyed. Once a vehicle ceases to exist its registration number is cancelled.

If your vehicle has been scrapped, you will not be able to transfer its registration number.

The law requires the person who actually breaks up or destroys the vehicle to notify DVLA that the vehicle has been scrapped and return the V5 registration document.

15. The cherished transfer and retention schemes

The **Cherished Transfer Scheme** enables an assigned registration number to be moved directly from one vehicle to another. Only the registered keeper of a vehicle is entitled to apply to transfer its number. Application form **V317 Transfer of a Vehicle Registration Number** must be completed and a transfer fee of £80 paid.

If the vehicle receiving the number in a cherished transfer is already registered, its existing number will become void unless an application to transfer or retain that number is made at the same time.

The **Retention Scheme** enables a number to be held apart from the vehicle it has been assigned to, for a 12 month period pending its re-assignment to another vehicle. Only the registered keeper of a vehicle is entitled to apply for a right of retention. Application form **V778/1 Retention of a Vehicle Registration Number** must be completed and the application fee is £25 plus an assignment fee of £80, bringing the total payable to £105.

Successful applicants are issued with a **V778 Retention Document**, valid for 12 months, which records details of the registration number, the grantee (the applicant), and nominee details where supplied in the application. If, after you have received your document, you wish to add or change nominee details, you will need to apply with a fee of £25 – for more details please see section 18 of this booklet.

If before the end of the 12 month period, you decide that you would like to extend entitlement for a further 12 month period you can simply use the Retention Document to apply together with the fee of £25. See section 17 of this booklet.

REMEMBER: The retention right is granted to the applicant (the grantee) alone and is non-transferable – the nominee has no rights to the number.

Only the grantee can apply to have the retained registration number assigned, and it can only be assigned to a vehicle which is registered to the grantee, or to the nominee shown on the retention document.

Once you have assigned the retained number to your, or your nominee's vehicle, you have fully exercised your rights under the terms of the retention facility. After assignment, entitlement to the number comes through being the keeper of the vehicle which has received it. Only the keeper is entitled to apply for further retention or transfer of the number – see also sections 4 and 10 of this booklet.

If the vehicle which is receiving the retained number is already registered, its existing number will become void unless an application to retain or transfer that number is made at the same time – see also section 23.

The **V317** and **V778/1** forms contain notes for guidance and are available from DVLA, Swansea, or your nearest DVLA Local Office. The **address** of your nearest DVLA Local Office can be found in booklet V100 – Registering and Licensing your Vehicle, which is available from all post offices. The **telephone number** of your nearest office can be found in The Phone Book under “Driving and Vehicles (Vehicle Registration and Licensing)”.

Before you apply, check your **V5** registration document to make sure that the number is transferable – see section 23 of this booklet. If it is not, it will say so on the **V5**. If the registration document states that the registration number is non-transferable, then it cannot be retained either. However, the vehicle may still be eligible to **receive** a cherished mark (this does not apply if the vehicle has a “Q” mark – see section 22 of this booklet).

Check to make sure that the conditions for the transfer and retention schemes can be complied with. These conditions (at time of printing) are as follows:

Vehicles must be available for inspection.

The inspection helps to verify entitlement to the registration number being transferred/retained. Both the donor (the vehicle giving up the number) and the recipient (the vehicle receiving the number) may be called for inspection.

Vehicles must be subject to MOT/HGV test.

Non-testable vehicles such as agricultural tractors and milk floats, for example, are outside the scope of the schemes. Only testable vehicles can participate in transfers and retentions and valid test certificates must accompany applications.

Vehicles must be currently licensed,

or in the process of being licensed. Applications will still be considered, however, if the **donor** vehicles's licence (tax disc) **expired** within 6 months of the date of the application. If the licence has been voluntarily surrendered for refund, the 6 month concession does not apply.

Note: donor vehicles that are not old enough to be tested (i.e up to 3 years for cars or 1 year for HGV's) do not have to be licensed in order to participate in the number transfer or retention facilities. But remember, the law requires that any vehicle which is being used or kept on a public road must be licensed.

Please note you cannot use the transfer, retention or Sale of Marks facilities to make your vehicle appear younger than it actually is.

If you are satisfied that you have met all the conditions, you can send your application to your nearest DVLA Local Office. If everything is in order and the application is approved, the donor vehicle will be allocated a replacement registration number appropriate to its age.

Note: Wherever possible, the donor vehicle will be re-united with the number it gave up as a result of a previous transfer or assignment. If the donor vehicle was first registered before 1963 it will be allocated a replacement number that does not contain a year identifier. In both circumstances the replacement number will be allocated on a non-transferable basis. This means that you will not be able to transfer the number or put it onto retention at a later date. The vehicle will, however, be able to receive a number in a future transfer or assignment.

Replacement tax disc(s) will be issued, and the MOT certificate(s) – where applicable – will be endorsed to reflect the change of registration number(s). The application will then be sent by the DVLA Local Office to DVLA, Swansea, for authorisation and completion.

Once completed, registration document(s) showing the changed registration number will be sent out from DVLA, Swansea, to the keeper(s). In the case of a retention application, a **V778 Retention Document**, valid for 12 months, will also be sent to the grantee.

IMPORTANT: DO NOT dispose of the vehicle until the application has been fully completed and you have received the amended registration document(s). If you dispose of the vehicle too soon, you may lose entitlement to the number.

REMEMBER: Once your transfer/retention has been successfully completed, tell your insurers that the vehicle's registration number has changed. If a heavy goods vehicle was involved you must also complete form VTG10 and send it with a copy of your new registration document and the appropriate fee to the Vehicle Inspectorate, Goods Vehicle Centre, 91-92 The Strand, Swansea SA1 2DH or to your local Goods Vehicle Testing Station. Details of current fees are available on request. For further information, please telephone the Goods Vehicle Centre on 01792 458888.

If the vehicle is a Public Service Vehicle, you must also send your Certificate of Initial Fitness and Test Certificate along with your new registration document to Records Maintenance Section, VI Swansea (see address above).



16. Are there any special rules for motorcycles/mopeds?

No. On 1 October 2001, the rule that previously restricted the participation of motorcycles/mopeds in the number transfer arrangements was lifted. This means that motorcycles/mopeds can now participate freely in the number transfer arrangements provided they meet the normal requirements which apply to all vehicles.

17. What if my assignment/retention rights are due to expire and I do not have a receiving vehicle for the registration number?

Approximately 28 days **before** your rights are due to expire, you should receive a reminder notice/letter from DVLA, Swansea. It will advise you of the imminent expiry of your rights and offer you the opportunity of purchasing, for a £25 fee, a 12 month extension period.

IMPORTANT: There is no obligation on the part of DVLA to send you a reminder. It is your responsibility to know when your rights are due to expire and it is up to you to either assign the number or apply for an extension before this happens. Your rights will be lost if you act too late.

18. Can I add or change nominee details on my certificate of entitlement/retention document?

Yes, providing your certificate/document is current. The fee is £25. Your reminder notice/letter, your Certificate of Entitlement or Retention Document will tell you how to apply.

19. What if I decide that I no longer want the registration number?

You do not have to assign the number if you do not wish to; you can simply allow your assignment/retention rights to expire. You need take no further action unless you paid the (£80) assignment fee when you acquired the rights; in this case you can apply to DVLA, Swansea, for a refund of this fee – your Entitlement Reminder Notice, Certificate of Entitlement or Retention Document tells you how.

If you allow your rights to expire, you will not be able to recover them at a later date.

You may only apply for refund of the assignment fee after the rights have expired.

You will not be able to apply for refund of the purchase price, VAT or the extension/retention fee.

20. What happens to my registration number if I export my vehicle?

You are legally obliged to notify DVLA if you are taking your vehicle abroad for more than 12 months. More information on this can be found in leaflet V100 which is available from DVLA Local Offices and main Post Offices.

What you need to do to secure the registration number depends on the circumstances. For example, you may be selling the vehicle overseas. In this case, you must either transfer or retain the number before you part with the vehicle and **before** the vehicle leaves GB. Alternatively, you may be going abroad with the vehicle for a few years and intend to bring it back with you when you return. In this case transfer or retention before you leave is not essential, as most vehicles upon return to this country from overseas are able to reclaim their GB registration numbers, provided documentary evidence to link the vehicle and the number is available.

The best course of action is to get advice from your DVLA Local Office or from Customer Enquiries at DVLA, Swansea, **well in advance** of the planned date of export. The **address** of your nearest DVLA Local Office can be found in booklet V100 – Registering and Licensing your Vehicle, which is available from all post offices. The **telephone number** of your nearest office can be found in The Phone Book under “Driving and Vehicles (Vehicle Registration and Licensing)”. You can write to Customer Enquiries (Vehicles) at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Swansea SA99 1BL.

If you wish to telephone, you can ring **0870 240 0010** between 8.00am and 8.30pm Monday to Friday and between 8.00am and 5.30pm Saturday.

Please note: If you wish to transfer or retain your number you must do so before the vehicle leaves Great Britain – you cannot apply once the vehicle is out of the country.

21. I have an old vehicle which is not registered at DVLA. Can I register the vehicle and transfer or retain its registration number?

It is possible for you to register the vehicle at DVLA but you will not be able to transfer or put the number onto retention.

If you are able to supply documentary evidence (eg the old-style log book) to establish a link between the vehicle and the registration number, you should be able to register the vehicle under the original number. If you do not have documentary evidence, or you do not know the vehicle's registration number, the vehicle may still be registered but in this case a number appropriate to its age will be assigned by DVLA. If the age or origin of the vehicle cannot be established, then DVLA may register the vehicle under a "Q" number. **Whatever the circumstances, however, the vehicle's registration number will be non-transferable.** This arrangement helps to safeguard entitlement by removing the incentive there would otherwise be for spurious claims to attractive old registration numbers.

For more details please see leaflet **V848 "How to Register Your Old Vehicle"**, available from your nearest DVLA Local Office or DVLA, Swansea.

22. My vehicle has a 'Q' prefix registration number. Can it participate in the transfer and retention schemes?

Sorry, no. Vehicles are assigned "Q" prefix registration numbers to draw attention to the fact that their origins or age are uncertain. "Q" numbers are therefore non-transferable and must remain with the vehicle unless documentary evidence which confirms its origins/age comes to light. In this case, the evidence, should be sent to your nearest DVLA Local Office who may then assign a replacement age-related number to the vehicle.

23. My V5 registration document says my registration number is non-transferable. Can I transfer a cherished number onto my vehicle?

Yes. Although you cannot transfer or retain a non-transferable number, the vehicle can receive a registration number providing the non-transferable number is not a “Q” mark and providing the vehicle meets the normal conditions of the Sales, Transfer and Retention schemes (see the appropriate sections elsewhere in this booklet).

24. I have seen Northern Ireland registration numbers advertised. Can I transfer one onto my vehicle?

Yes providing the donor and recipient vehicles are registered at DVLA or on the NI Register. Similarly, you may transfer a GB number to a vehicle registered in NI. In either case the vehicles must, of course, meet the requirements of the transfer scheme (see section 15).

Northern Ireland registration numbers held on **V750(NI)** certificates may not be assigned directly to GB registered vehicles. They must be assigned first to NI registered vehicles.

25. I have an old style log book/V5 registration document but the vehicle no longer exists. Can I claim the registration number?

Sorry, no. Once a vehicle has ceased to exist, entitlement to its number also ceases. Possession of a log book or registration document alone does not give entitlement to a registration number. If a vehicle has been scrapped, you are required by law to notify the Secretary of State and return the registration document to DVLA, Swansea.

All fees quoted are correct at time of printing.

