How To Change Vehicle Ownership

What’s Inside

• How To Get Started.
• What Constitutes a Change in Ownership?
• What Fees Will Be Due?
• Is a Smog Inspection Required?
• What Documents Are Required?
• Frequently Asked Questions.
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How To Get Started

You will always need:

• California Certificate of Title or Application for Duplicate Title (REG 227)
• Signature(s) of seller(s) and lienholder, if any
• Signature(s) of buyer(s)
• Transfer fee

You may also need:

• Smog certification
• Use tax and/or various other fees

Additional documentation

For details, see inside.

What Constitutes a Change in Ownership?

Any change of the registered owner or lienholder (legal owner) of a vehicle or vessel is considered to be a change in ownership that must be updated on the records at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). The change is usually due to:

• Sale or gift
• Adding or deleting the name of an owner
• Inheritance
• Satisfaction of lien (full payment of car loan)

Transfer—Whenever there is a change of ownership, the DMV refers to the transaction as a “transfer.”

Seller—The person(s) and/or company shown as the registered owner on the Certificate of Title (and DMV’s records) is always referred to as the seller, even if the vehicle is a gift.

Buyer—The person(s) and/or company who is going to become the new registered owner is referred to as the buyer.

Save Time. Go Online.
www.DMV.ca.gov

Go online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at www.DMV.ca.gov to:

• Renew your vehicle registration.
• Renew your driver license.
• Calculate registration fees.
• Verify & update vehicle registration insurance suspension information.
• Take a sample driver license test.
• Order special license plates.
• Get forms, brochures, and handbooks.
• Find answers to your DMV questions.
• Make appointments (except commercial driving tests).

Call 1-800-777-0133 for automated service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to:

• Make an appointment (except commercial driving tests).
• Renew your vehicle registration or driver license (see your renewal notice for the Renewal ID Number-RIN).
• Get forms and publications.
• Listen to general information.
• Verify & update vehicle registration insurance suspension information.

To make a commercial driving test appointment online, call 1-800-777-0133 during our normal business hours:

- 8-5 Mon., Tues., Thurs., & Friday.
- 9-5 on Wednesdays.

For hearing impaired service call TTY 1-800-368-4327.

DMV TOLL FREE 1-800-777-0133

Selling/Buying a Vehicle?

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• Where Do I Sign?
A. Where do I sign?

There are four variations of the California Certificate of Title (Rainbow Title). The DMV began printing the 7- by 8-inch Certificate of Title in 1988. The older 4- by 5-inch Ownership Certificate was commonly referred to as the “pink slip.” The examples above and below indicate who signs where to properly change the ownership of your vehicle. The Certificate of Title has a special box for odometer mileage disclosure and acknowledgment. If you are using the “pink slip” or an earlier version of the Certificate of Title and odometer disclosure is required, both the seller and buyer must also complete a Vehicle/Vessel Transfer and Reassignment Form (REG 262).

B. Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I determine a selling price for my vehicle?

Check similar vehicles in newspaper classified advertisements, on the Internet, or at local used vehicle dealerships. Libraries also have various value/pricing guides to reference.

2. What do I do with the license plates?

Most vehicles have sequentially issued “standard” license plates that remain with the vehicle when ownership is transferred. If the license plate is a special interest or personalized license plate, you must decide if you want to retain the plates for use on another vehicle, or release your interest in the plate. Complete a Special Interest License Plate Application (REG 17) or a Special License Plate Application (REG 17A) indicating your retention or release of the special plate and give the form to the buyer.

3. How long will it take for everything to be complete?

When you give the buyer all of the required documentation and DMV receives your completed Notice of Transfer and Release of Liability, the seller’s part of the transaction is complete. Once the buyer has provided DMV with all the proper documentation and fees, the vehicle record is updated to reflect the change of ownership, and a registration card is issued. A new title is issued from DMV headquarters within 60 calendar days.

4. Where do I sign?

The lienholder shown signs and dates there to release ownership.

The new registered owner shown above signs, dates, and prints their name here to disclose the odometer mileage reading.

The new registered owner shown on the back of the title signs, dates, and prints their name here to acknowledge the odometer mileage reading.

The sample above and below indicate who signs where to properly change the ownership of your vehicle. The Certificate of Title has a special box for odometer mileage disclosure and acknowledgment. If you are using the “pink slip” or an earlier version of the Certificate of Title and odometer disclosure is required, both the seller and buyer must also complete a Vehicle/Vessel Transfer and Reassignment Form (REG 262).

5. Will I have to pay for anything after I have sold my vehicle?

All of the transfer fees are the responsibility of the buyer.

6. Should I keep any papers after the vehicle is transferred?

Keep a copy of the completed Notice of Transfer and Release of Liability.

7. Do I owe taxes of any kind on the money I receive for the sale of my vehicle?

Contact your tax advisor.

8. What is the difference between “and” and “or” between co-owner names on a title?

When the names are joined by the word “or,” one owner can sell the vehicle without the other’s signature or consent. “And” or a slash (/) requires the signature of each owner to sell the vehicle.

9. How do I determine a selling price for my vehicle?

Check similar vehicles in newspaper classified advertisements, on the Internet, or at local used vehicle dealerships. Libraries also have various value/pricing guides to reference.

10. What do I do with the license plates?

Most vehicles have sequentially issued “standard” license plates that remain with the vehicle when ownership is transferred. If the license plate is a special interest or personalized license plate, you must decide if you want to retain the plates for use on another vehicle, or release your interest in the plate. Complete a Special Interest License Plate Application (REG 17) or a Special License Plate Application (REG 17A) indicating your retention or release of the special plate and give the form to the buyer.

11. How long will it take for everything to be complete?

When you give the buyer all of the required documentation and DMV receives your completed Notice of Transfer and Release of Liability, the seller’s part of the transaction is complete. Once the buyer has provided DMV with all the proper documentation and fees, the vehicle record is updated to reflect the change of ownership, and a registration card is issued. A new title is issued from DMV headquarters within 60 calendar days.

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The sample above and below indicate who signs where to properly change the ownership of your vehicle. The Certificate of Title has a special box for odometer mileage disclosure and acknowledgment. If you are using the “pink slip” or an earlier version of the Certificate of Title and odometer disclosure is required, both the seller and buyer must also complete a Vehicle/Vessel Transfer and Reassignment Form (REG 262).