

Vehicle Licensing Guide

Registering a Motor Vehicle VLIC-4.000

Original Date: 05/01/1997
Revision Date: 12/10/2025

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POLICY	
Title: Registering a Motor Vehicle	
Effective Date: May 1, 1997	Revision Date: September 25, 2024
Authority: Code of Virginia §§ 9.1-900 et seq., 46.2-100 , 46.2-600 , 46.2-600.1 , 46.2-646 , 46.2-666 , to 46.2-683 , 46.2-694 , 46.2-711 , 46.2-712 , 46.2-714 , 46.2-715 , 46.2-716	
Policy: • Upon application for original registration, DMV shall register the motor vehicle, autocycle, moped, motorcycle, trailer, or semitrailer described in the application and shall issue a new registration card, license plate, or plates as requested and collect required fees. • Original one-year registrations shall expire on the last day of the twelfth month following the date of registration. • Multi-year registrations of two and three years may be issued at the customer's request for all eligible motor vehicles, trailers, and semitrailers. • DMV will issue one license plate for every registered autocycle, moped, motorcycle, tractor truck, semitrailer, or trailer, and two license plates for every other registered motor vehicle, except to licensed motor vehicle dealers and persons delivering unladen vehicles who shall be furnished one license plate. • Decals shall be appropriately placed on the license plates and shall indicate the month and year of expiration. On the issuance of the decals, a new registration card shall be issued with the same date of expiration as the decals. • The vehicle owner is responsible to ensure the vehicle for which registration is applied is entitled to the registration type applied for and the fee paid, according to the vehicle's weight, design, and use. • DMV issues both standard series license plates as well as special license plates that are designed and issued for various categories of vehicles operating on the highways.	
Exception: • For vehicles exempt from registration, refer to Registration Exempt Vehicles. • Multi-year registrations are not issued to: • <<<<<REVISION • Vehicles with a gross vehicle weight of 55,000 lbs. or more, • Vehicles registered under the International Registration Plan (IRP) (refer to VLIC-6.005), • Vehicles subject to emissions with a model year greater than 4 years are not eligible for 3 year registrations (refer to VLIC-4.410). END REVISION>>>>> • DMV may issue permanent license plates without decals and without a month and year of expiration for: • All trailers and semitrailers, regardless of weight; • Trucks and tractor trucks with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) or gross combination weight rating (GCWR) of more than 26,000 pounds; • Taxicabs or other motor vehicles performing a taxicab service; and • Common carrier vehicles operated for hire, both of the latter as defined in § 46.2-2000 that are in compliance with the requirements of Chapter 20 (§ 46.2-2000 et seq.) • Trucks and tractor trucks with GVWR or GCWR of at least 7,501 but not more than 26,000 pounds, when used for business only and for farms registered with DMV. • DMV shall NOT issue or renew special license plates to any vehicle owner or co-owner who is registered pursuant to the Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry Act (Virginia Code § 9.1-900, et seq.), if the design of such plate, including any logo, emblem, seal, or symbol therein, references children or children's programs or if any revenue-sharing provision authorized for such special license plates contributes, directly or indirectly, to any fund or programs or if any revenue-sharing provision authorized for such special license plates contributes, directly or indirectly, to any fund or program established for the benefit of children (Va. Code § 46.2-725). • Additionally, DMV shall NOT issue or renew any personalized license plates to any vehicle owner or co-owner who is registered pursuant to Virginia Code § 9.1-900, et seq., if the requested plate combination can be read, interpreted, or understood to be a reference to children (Va. Code § 46.2-726).	

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MULTI-YEAR REGISTRATION AND DISCOUNTS

- First-time registrations may be issued for one, two, and three years at CSCs, DMV Selects, and through the mail.
- DMV offers multi-year registration discounts to vehicles registered for the first time (original registration). Refer to the Original Registration Service Options & Discount table below:

Original Registration Service Options & Discount			
Registration Original MULTI-YEAR DISCOUNT ¹	Registration Processing Location:		
	CSC	DMV SELECT	Mail
1-Year (No Discount)	✓	✓	✓
2-Year \$2 Discount	✓	✓	✓
3-Year \$3 Discount ²	✓	✓	✓
¹ The discount for two or three year original registrations is not prorated and not refundable if the registration is canceled before it expires. ² The 3-year option is not available for vehicles subject to emission requirements as the vehicle must be inspected every 2 years, except that new, demonstrator and used vehicles of the current and 3 previous model years may be eligible to be registered for 3 years because these vehicles are exempt from emissions inspections for up to 4 years.			

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CUSTOMER REQUIREMENTS

1. For vehicles not yet titled in Virginia, submit the Application for Certificate of Title and Registration ([VSA 17A](#)), other required ownership documents and fees for titling a motor vehicle.
2. For vehicles titled in Virginia, submit one of the following completed and signed applications for registration:
 - Vehicle Registration Application ([VSA 14](#)), or
 - The VSA-14 is not required in service locations with credit card terminals when **renewing** or **reissuing** a registration, provided no changes will be made to the vehicle record. This does not apply to dealer work. Refer to the [Vehicle Reissue/Renewal on DMV Credit Card Terminals EZ Guide](#).
 - Any time the vehicle information (gross weight, vehicle color, body type, etc.) is changed in the system as part of the renewal or reissue transaction, or the license plate requires submission of certifications or other documents to authorize its issuance, required application(s) must be submitted.
 - License Plate Application ([VSA 10](#)) to apply for souvenir, personalized, or special license plates.
3. Submit other required applications, affidavits or certifications as required by referring to the following VLIC Table of Contents for the type of registration/license plates being applied for:
EXAMPLE: For Antique License Plates, see [VLIC-4.310](#); for firefighting, emergency plates, see [VLIC-4.206](#).
 - Registration Transactions
 - License Plate Types-Standard Issue
 - License Plate Types-Special Interest
 - Registration Exceptions
4. Certify on the application, or on the credit card terminal when no application is required, that the vehicle is insured with the required minimum liability insurance coverage.
5. Pay required registration fees.

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FRONT COUNTER CSR

1. For vehicles not yet titled in Virginia, process a title transaction in accordance with [VLIC-3.000](#) before registering the vehicle and issuing license plates.
2. Verify accurate completion of the VSA-14 or VSA 10.
 - When registering a vehicle that is being titled in Virginia for the first time, verify that the applicant is the owner or co-owner of the vehicle or has power of attorney granting legal authority to act for the owner.
 - Verify the vehicle owner's identity, or
 - If an agent for the owner, review the power of attorney to ensure legal authority is granted (copy is acceptable) and return it to the customer.
3. The VSA-14 is not required in service locations with credit card terminals when **renewing** or **reissuing** a registration, provided no changes will be made to the vehicle record. This does not apply to dealer work.
 - Inquire on the vehicle record to verify the owner's customer number and ownership of the vehicle before reissuing plates or decals.
4. Review the VSA 14 or VSA 10, or ask the customer when no application is required, to determine the type of license plates requested and the length of the registration period.

- Original registrations for one, two, and three years are available at CSCs, DMV Selects, and through the mail (refer to the [Original Registration Service Options & Discount](#) table).

IMPORTANT: Pickup/panel trucks having registered gross weights up to, but not exceeding, 10,000 pounds can be issued standard license plates.

	Gross weight is less than or equal to 7,500 pounds	Gross weight is 7,501 to 10,000 pounds	Gross weight is 10,001 pounds or greater
PPTR is Personal Use	Standard Plate	Standard Plate	Truck Plate
PPTR is Business Use	Standard Plate	Truck Plate	Truck Plate

5. Review and verify other applications, affidavits, or certifications for the type of license plate being applied for as required in the appropriate procedure from the VLIC chapters listed below:

EXAMPLE: For Antique License Plates, see [VLIC-4.310](#); For firefighting, emergency plates, see [VLIC-4.206](#).

- Registration Transactions
 - License Plate Types-Standard Issue
 - License Plate Types-Special Interest
 - Registration Exceptions
6. If the customer chooses the Special Communication Needs Impairment Indicator option as the owner(s) or for a regular occupant of the vehicle, and presents a VSA 68 or VSA 17A, select the indicator as requested by the customer.
 - Ensure the customer has completed a VSA 68 or VSA 17A, as required.
 - The customer must submit a completed VSA 68:
 - If the vehicle owner is disabled and the vehicle is already titled in their name.
 - If the vehicle owner is not disabled, but is requesting the special communication needs impairment indicator to be put on their vehicle record for a regular occupant of the vehicle.
 - If the customer requests to remove a special communication needs impairment indicator from their registration.
 - Customers, who are titling a vehicle, must complete the VSA 17A as the owner(s) or for a regular occupant of the vehicle and select the special communication needs impairment indicator.
 - Inform the customer the special communication needs impairment indicator does not display on their registration. However, it will be listed on the vehicle record.
 7. Verify that ALL customers complete the Personal Property Tax Relief Eligibility section of the VSA 17A and VSA 14, whether the vehicle is for business or personal use.
 8. For special background license plate requests:
 - a. Inquire on eligibility requirements for the type of special plate requested.
 - [Special plate](#) search on DMVnow
 - [Special Interest License Plate Table](#)
 - License Plate Types - Special Interest - VLIC Table of Contents
 - b. Verify the customer's eligibility for the special plates requested.
 - When any of the following "Restricted Plate" error messages is returned by the system:

SYSTEM RESTRICTED PLATE ERROR MESSAGES ¹	
Special Plate Restricted Messages	Personalized Plate Restricted Messages
• Restricted Plate Type Purchase-RPLA	• Restricted Plate Message Purchase-RPLA
• Restricted Plate Type Renewal-RPLA	• Restricted Plate Message Renewal-RPLA
• Restricted Plate Type Reservation-RPLA	• Restricted Plate Message Reservation-RPLA
• Restricted Plate Type Transfer-RPLA	• Restricted Plate Message Transfer-RPLA
¹ For customers with plates in-hand requesting original issue, reissue, transfer or exchange, if the system returns the "restricted plate" error message M9440 Restricted Message Call Special Registration at (804) 367-1341 – RPLA the CSR will call SRWC at the number indicated requesting a determination of eligibility and follow SRWC instructions. Refer to VLIC-4.420 .	

- i. **DO NOT DISCUSS THE RESTRICTION WITH THE CUSTOMER.**
- ii. Read the following message to the customer that displays on the screen exactly as it appears:

"I apologize; one or more owners of this vehicle are not eligible for this plate; however, I can assist with issuing another plate for this vehicle."

FRONT COUNTER CSR (Continued)

- iii. If the customer has further questions or concerns regarding the restriction, be courteous and provide them with the contact information for DMV Contact Center:

- Phone: 804-497-7100, or
- Email DMV Contact Center from DMV's website, DMVNow.com by:
 - Selecting [Contact US](#) at the top of the home page,
 - Under Email, select [secure online form](#).

NOTE: Effective July 1, 2016, according to Virginia Code §§ [46.2-725](#) or [46.2-726](#), DMV cannot issue or renew any personalized or special license plates for any owner or co-owner of a vehicle who is registered pursuant to Virginia Code § 9.1-900, et seq., if any of the following is true:

- **For the personalized plate messages:**

Requested registration numbers or letters or combination thereof could be read, interpreted, or understood to be a reference to children.

- **For special license plates:**

Design of such special license plates, including any logo, emblem, seal, or symbol therein, references children or children's programs or if any revenue-sharing provision authorized for such special license plates contributes, directly or indirectly, to any fund or program established for the benefit of children.

c. Verify submission of required documents for the special plates requested.

9. For personalized/reserved license plate requirements, refer to [VLIC-4.420](#).

- If the vehicle owner or co-owner(s) is restricted by the system from issuance of a requested personalized/reserved plate message (restricted plate-RPLA), follow guidelines under special background plates [7.b. above](#) or refer to [VLIC-4.420](#).

NOTE: Effective July 1, 2016, according to Virginia Code § [46.2-726](#), DMV cannot issue or renew any personalized plates for any owner or co-owner of a vehicle who is registered pursuant to Virginia Code § 9.1-900, et seq., if the requested registration numbers or letters or combination thereof could be read, interpreted, or understood to be a reference to children.

10. Enter the vehicle registration information into the system and certify minimum liability insurance coverage according to the table below:

Verification of Vehicle Information and Insurance Coverage ¹		
Registration Original, Transfer (Process does not change for these transactions)	Registration Renewal	Registration Reissue ²
1. Key registration information from application into system. 2. Verify customer certified minimum liability insurance coverage on the VSA 14 or VSA 10 (and/or other as required). • If not certified on the application, ask the customer to certify if the vehicle is covered with minimum liability insurance ▪ Insurance requirements do not apply to moped registrations.	1. Key registration information from customer verbal responses into system. 2. Customer verifies vehicle information at card terminal. • Correct any incorrect information in the system, as indicated by the customer, and ask him to re-verify on the card terminal. 3. Customer verifies minimum liability insurance coverage on the vehicle. • Continue processing if the customer indicates "yes" that the vehicle is insured.	1. Key registration information from customer verbal responses into system. 2. Customer verifies vehicle information at card swipe terminal. • Correct any incorrect information in the system, as indicated by the customer, and ask him to re-verify on the card terminal.
¹ Refer to the Vehicle Reissue/Renewal on DMV Credit Card Terminals EZ Guide . ² Customers are not required to verify insurance coverage for registration reissue transactions.		

11. Process the registration.

12. Collect required registration [fee\(s\)](#):

NOTE: Not all special plate types are available in the system for Low-Speed Vehicles. In the rare event that a customer requests a special plate type for their Low-Speed Vehicle that is not available in the system:

- a. Inform the customer about fees for the special plate which must be collected in advance and the request sent to [License Plate Development](#) at Headquarters for development.
- b. Collect the fee for the desired special plate type and enter in the system as "Miscellaneous Collections" using the Miscellaneous Revenues transaction in accordance with [CSCOM-115.2](#).

FRONT COUNTER CSR (Continued)

- c. Print the Miscellaneous Revenue transaction receipt,

- d. Fax the transaction receipt and completed and signed [VSA 14](#) or [VSA 10](#) to [License Plate Development](#) in Headquarters (HQ) at **(804) 367-6379**.
- Other fees that are collected by the system at time of registration and that may be calculated into the cost for the plate when prorating the registration include:
 - Local Vehicle Registration (LVR) Program (refer to [VLIC-314](#))
 - Virginia motor vehicle safety inspection program
 - Emergency Medical Services (EMS) fees:
 - NOT collected for:
 - Registrations that are prorated
 - Plates not charged a registration fee (i.e. [Disabled Veterans](#), [Medal of Honor](#) (Legion of Valor), and [Prisoner of War](#))
 - State and local government registrations
 - Vehicles weighing 7,501 lbs and more
 - Motorcycle surcharge (goes to the Motorcycle Rider Safety Training Program Fund), when, if applicable
 - NOT collected for:
 - Motorcycle registrations that are prorated
 - Motorcycle plates issued to federal, state, and local government
 - Autocycle registrations (regardless that autocycles are issued motorcycle plates)
 - Emissions Inspection Fee (refer to [VLIC-4.410](#))
 - Collected for all vehicles garaged in emissions jurisdictions, **including** plates that require no registration fee (i.e. [Disabled Veterans](#), [Medal of Honor](#) (Legion of Valor), and [Prisoner of War](#))
 - NOT collected for:
 - Vehicles weighing over 10,000 pounds
 - Plates issued to state and local government vehicles
 - Motorcycles pursuant to Va. Code § [46.2-1177](#)(2)
 - Autocycles pursuant to Va. Code § [46.2-1177](#) (5)
 - Electric Vehicle License Tax
 - The annual electric license tax is NOT collected when registering mopeds converted to electric propulsion (refer to [VLIC-3.451](#) and [VLIC-200A](#))

13. Issue the license plates and decals (if applicable):

- The standard issue license plate for an autocycle (vehicle type AC) is a motorcycle plate, regardless that autocycles are not considered a motorcycle for title and registration purposes (refer to Va. Code § [46.2-100](#)).
- For customers who are not sure if the vehicle meets the definition of an autocycle or a three-wheeled motorcycle, CSRs will refer to the Vehicle Type Reference Guide ([DMV 275](#)) to assist. However, customers are responsible to determine the vehicle type being registered.
- For standard series plates, issue:
 - Appropriate plates and decals
 - Registration card
- For out-of-stock personalized or special license plates (including special plate types not yet available for Low-Speed Vehicles):
 - Renew the plates and issue 30-day decals when existing license plates are due to expire to allow time for the new plates to arrive in the mail
 - Issue multi-use plates 30-day synthetic paper license plates in accordance with [VLIC-4.225](#) when the vehicle is not currently registered
 - Advise the customer he may drive using the current license plates, if not due to expire
 - Issue associated registration card
- Advise the customer to allow 4-6 weeks for their special and/or personalized license plates to come in the mail.
 - For Low-Speed Vehicle plates faxed to [License Plate Development](#) at HQ, advise the customer that the special low-speed plate must first be developed and may take longer.

14. Advise the customer of the following Virginia requirements:

- Virginia Motor Vehicle Safety Inspection: refer to [Virginia's Insurance Requirements](#)
AND
- Personal Property Tax/Locality Sticker.
 - Some localities do not require a sticker/decals to be displayed on the vehicle; however, payment of the local registration fee is still required. Advise the customer to check with the locality in which the vehicle is garaged.

15. Prepare documents with correct barcode coversheet and place in appropriate area for document preparation.

DMV CONTACT CENTER ACTIONS

- For customers **applying by phone** for issuance or renewal of special plates or a personalized plate message for which one of the following Restricted Plate Error Messages is returned by the system:

SYSTEM RESTRICTED PLATE ERROR MESSAGES	
Special Plate Restricted Messages	Personalized Plate Restricted Messages
• Restricted Plate Type Purchase-RPLA	• Restricted Plate Message Purchase-RPLA
• Restricted Plate Type Renewal-RPLA	• Restricted Plate Message Renewal-RPLA
• Restricted Plate Type Reservation-RPLA	• Restricted Plate Message Reservation-RPLA
• Restricted Plate Type Transfer-RPLA	• Restricted Plate Message Transfer-RPLA

OR

For customers **calling to find out why they were restricted** from issuance or renewal of special plates or a personalized plate message at a CSC,

OR

For customers **calling in after receiving a letter** from DMV in the mail indicating they are restricted by the system from issuance or renewal of special plates or a personalized plate message:

- Authenticate that the caller is the owner or a co-owner of the vehicle.
 - If someone other than the owner or a co-owner is on the phone, advise the caller that the owner or co-owner must call for information about the requested personalized message or special plate.
 - Check Vehicle Notes in the system for the vehicle the caller is attempting to register. In some cases, the owner or co-owner who is the restricted party will be identified by a note in the following format "**RPLA – Owner#**," where the owner number corresponds to the order in which the owners are listed on the vehicle record (owner 1, owner 2, etc.). If a note exists, and the caller is NOT the restricted party, do NOT identify to the caller which owner is the restricted party.
 - Advise the owner or co-owner of the following information:

Effective July 1, 2016, according to Virginia Code §§ [46.2-725](#) or [46.2-726](#), DMV cannot issue or renew any personalized or special license plates for any owner or co-owner of a vehicle who is registered pursuant to the Va. Code § 9.1-900, et seq., if any of the following is true:

 - For the personalized plate messages:**
Requested registration numbers or letters or combination thereof could be read, interpreted, or understood to be a reference to children.
 - For special license plates:**
Design of such special license plates, including any logo, emblem, seal, or symbol therein, references children or children's programs or if any revenue-sharing provision authorized for such special license plates contributes, directly or indirectly, to any fund or program established for the benefit of children.
 - Offer to assist the customer with issuing another plate for the vehicle.
- DO NOT promise the acceptability of documents to customers required to come to DMV.
 - DO NOT use phrases like:
 - "You have everything you need, just go to a CSC and they will issue your plates."
 - DO use phrasing such as:
 - "The documents you have listed sound like they may be acceptable: The CSC will make the final determination of your eligibility to receive your registration and plates."

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POINTS TO REMEMBER

- CSCs do not process transactions for dealer or title agents working on behalf of the dealer (**customers, title loan companies and financial institutions are permitted to submit their own titling and registration application in a CSC**). Dealer transactions include titling, registration and issuing transport tags. Dealers must submit transaction requests to any one of the following locations and they will be processed within 5 business days of receipt:

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Dealer Title Processing Locations				
Manheim Fredericksburg ¹ 120 Auction Drive Fredericksburg, VA 22406	Manheim Harrisonburg ¹ 3560 Early Road Harrisonburg, VA 22801	Adesa Auto Auction ¹ 43375 Old Ox Road Dulles, VA 20166	VIADA ¹ 1525 Huguenot Rd, Suite 202 Midlothian, VA 23113	American Auto Auction ¹ 656 S. Military Highway Virginia Beach, VA 23464
1. Locations accept drop off and mailed dealer transactions.				

END REVISION>>>>>

- Individuals applying for registration shall provide the Department with the residence address of the owner of the vehicle being registered.
- Only vehicle owners, co-owners, or their agent with a power of attorney may request and obtain an original issue of license plates.
- A business applying for registration shall provide the Department with the street address of the owner or lessee of the vehicle being registered. The address on the registration card may be either a post office box of the business or residence address of the applicant.
- Vehicles registered for the first time may be issued one-, two-, and three-year registrations in CSCs, DMV Selects, and through the mail. Multi-year discounts apply (refer to the [Original Registration Service Options & Discount](#) table).
- Customers may opt to receive electronic registration renewal notices by email, phone, or text message (E-Notification) instead of paper renewal notices. Once the owner opts in for E-notifications, both driver's license and vehicle renewal reminders will be sent electronically.
- DMV mails registration renewal reminders, and transmits E-Notifications approximately 45 days prior to the expiration date of the registration.
- Two or more vehicles owned by the same person may be scheduled to expire within the same registration period upon request by prorating registration fees.
- Decals are not required to be attached to permanent license plates that are issued pursuant to § [46.2-712](#) (refer to [VLIC-4.240](#)).
- License plates and decals are the property of the state and are subject to revocation, cancellation, and repossession by DMV at any time pursuant to Va. Code § [46.2-713](#).
- License plates on vehicles are to be mounted and displayed in accordance with Va. Code §§ [46.2-715](#), and [46.2-716](#).

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RELATED LINKS

DMV Fees ([DMV-201](#))
Registration Information Sheet ([VSA 14I](#))
[Registration Exempt Vehicles](#)
[Virginia's Insurance Requirements](#)
Vehicle Type Reference Guide ([DMV 275](#)) – Not distributed to customers
[Vehicle Reissue/Renewal on DMV Credit Card Terminals EZ Guide](#)

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CONTACT

For additional information contact:

- Your CSC Manager/Assistant Manager
- VSA/[Titling Work Center](#)

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