

PERSONAL NUMBERPLATES

Use your head to get the identity you want

Whether you want to tell the world your name or simply make a statement, there's a personal numberplate out there for you. Buying one isn't so simple, though, with lots of companies selling them. Here's what you need to know.

- Shop around. Identical registrations are often advertised for sale by different companies at different prices.
- Check your seller is a member of the Cherished Numbers Dealers Association (CNDA), which has a strict code of conduct. Although the industry is unregulated, better sellers tend to join this association.
- When you've found a plate, you need to obtain the right to legally use it. To do this, you'll need a V750 Certificate of Entitlement form, which you can get from the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA). If your V750 expires before you assign it to a car, you can extend it, but it'll cost £25 a year.
- To register your plate for a new car, write or go to your local DVLA office with:
 - the car's registration document;
 - V750 form.

To register your plate for an existing car, write or go to your local DVLA office with:

- an insurance certificate;
- VED road tax;
- V750 form;
- MOT certificate (if your car is three years old or more).

Remember, you cannot put a personal numberplate on a car if it makes it look younger – for instance, you cannot put a plate starting with 'Y' on a T-registered car.

Registering a car with a new personal plate takes about four days from start to finish. It's illegal to use a car on public roads until it is registered.

- You can transfer a plate to another car for £80, as long as you are the registered keeper of the vehicle currently using the plate and both cars are road-legal or declared off-road. To do this, you'll need a V317, which also costs £80.
- If you are planning to sell your car but want to keep your plate, use a V778/1 retention certificate to keep your rights to the plate before you even advertise the car or think about trading it in. This costs £105 for the first 12 months and £25 a year after that. If you don't pay, you lose the right to use that plate in future.

It's important to have the retention rights to the plate before you sell the car – otherwise, you may well never see your numberplate again.

- Don't be tempted to alter the size or spacing of characters, or use fixing screws to alter the appearance of the plate – you could be fined up to £1000 and lose your right to hold the plate.
- Don't panic if you find your plate advertised for sale. Some companies advertise plates and, once they have a buyer, will approach you offering to buy your plate and then sell it on at a profit. If you are approached, get plenty of valuations from several established companies.