

# Reporting the Sale or Purchase of a Car



Created by Aneeqa Ahmed  
from Noun Project

## Introduction

This explains how to protect yourself after you have sold, bought, or transferred your car.

---

❖ Read this only if you live in the state of Washington.

---

## What if I still have questions after reading this?

Call the Department of Licensing at (360) 902-3770, visit their [Department's web site \(www.dol.wa.gov\)](https://www.dol.wa.gov), or contact your local auto licensing office.

## Part 1. I have sold or transferred my car.

### What do I do next?

1. You must transfer ownership of the car by signing the title (vehicle certificate of ownership) and giving it to the new owner. If your car is less than ten years old, you must also fill out the odometer disclosure statement on the back of the title.

---

❖ Do **not** give up your interest in the car and deliver the title to the new owner if they are making payments. See "I have sold my car. The buyer is making payments. When should I file a Report of Sale," below.

---

2. Give the Department of Licensing a written Report of Sale **within 5 days**. Do not count Saturdays, Sundays, or state and federal holidays. If you do not file

this report on time, you may still have criminal or civil responsibility for the operation of the car despite the sale.

3. Make sure the Department of Licensing has your current address. Otherwise, you may not get notices from a court or a towing company. You may not learn someone is holding you responsible for the actions of others who now have your car. You may lose the chance to fix a mistake.

### **Can I submit a Report of Sale after 5 business days?**

**Yes, but** the Department might treat a late filing as improperly filed and charge late fees. Filing on time protects you from parking tickets, towing charges, and any accidents that happen after you sell or transfer your car.

### **How do I report the sale or transfer?**

Take the Report of Sale to your local auto licensing office. (Find it [online](https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/vehoffices) at <https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/vehoffices>.) You can tear the report of sale form off from the car's "certificate of ownership" (title). You can also get a form at any auto licensing office, or report the sale [online](https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/extdriveses/NoLogon) at <https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/extdriveses/NoLogon>.

If you submit your Report of Sale in-person, you get a receipt you need to show a court or towing company that you properly reported the sale or transfer. If you file your Report of Sale online, save or print out the receipt.

**Do not mail your Report of Sale** to the Department of Licensing in Olympia. You will not get a receipt.

### **Is there a charge for filing a Report of Sale?**

Starting July 28, 2019, it costs \$13.25.

### **What do I put in the Report of Sale?**

- your name and address
- the date you sold or transferred your car

www.WashingtonLawHelp.org

- the buyer's or transferee's name
- the sale price, or list it as a gift or trade
- a description of your car, including its vehicle identification number (VIN) and license plate number

If you cannot provide this information, the Department may consider your Report of Sale improperly filed.

### **I gave the car away, or traded it with no money exchanged. Do I need to file a Report of Sale?**

**Yes.** Any time you give your car away, donate it, trade it in to a car dealer, or trade it to a private party, you should file a Report of Sale.

Check the "**gift/trade**" box on the report of sale form if you are reporting online. Put "**gift**" or "**trade**" in the box marked "**purchase price**" on the Report of Sale form if reporting in person.

### **The court awarded the car to someone else in a court order. Do I need to file a Report of Sale?**

**Yes.** Report the transfer as a gift or trade. See above.

### **I sold the car to a wrecking yard or sold it for parts. Should I file a Report of Sale?**

Yes.

### **I sold my car. The buyer is making payments. When should I file a Report of Sale?**

You must still file it **within 5 days** from the date of sale.

You and the buyer should go to your local auto licensing office together. Take the title (certificate of ownership) with you.

[www.WashingtonLawHelp.org](http://www.WashingtonLawHelp.org)

- 1.** File your Report of Sale.
- 2.** Your buyer must apply to be the registered owner.
- 3.** You and the buyer should apply for a new title saying the buyer is the registered owner and you are the legal owner.

The Department will issue and send you a new title. When the buyer finishes making payments, take that title to your local auto licensing office. Ask them to remove your name as the legal owner.

### **The buyer is still paying on the car. Am I responsible for parking tickets or towing charges during this time?**

Not if you properly reported the sale.

- **Tickets** - If the buyer became the car's registered owner at the same time you reported its sale, there is little chance that you will mistakenly get a ticket.
- **Towing** - You and the buyer **both** get a notice from a towing company if they tow the car. You get a notice only because you are the legal owner. This gives you a chance to pay the towing company to get the car back if the buyer will not pay. (You might want to. The car is your security for the buyer's payments.)

If you do not want to pay to get the car back, you will not be responsible for any extra charges if the towing company sells the car but the amount received is not enough to cover the towing charges.

### **What if I get charges for towing or parking tickets that are not mine?**

Show your Report of Sale receipt to the towing company or the court that issued the ticket. If you do not have a receipt, you can get a copy of your Report of Sale from the Department of Licensing with a Vehicle/Vessel Disclosure Request.

## Where can I get a Vehicle/Vessel Disclosure Request form?

- [online](http://www.dol.wa.gov/forms/224003.pdf) at [www.dol.wa.gov/forms/224003.pdf](http://www.dol.wa.gov/forms/224003.pdf).
- Call the Department of Licensing at (360) 902-3770. Ask them to mail you the form.
- At **some** local auto licensing offices.

Mail the completed form to the address listed on it. There is no charge.

## What if the person buying my car abandons it?

If your car has been abandoned and towed away after you sold/transferred it, you will not be guilty of “littering – abandoned vehicle” OR responsible for costs incurred in removing, storing, and disposing of it, **if** you have properly filed a Report of Sale or Transfer.

- 
- ❖ **You must report the sale of a car within 5 days to avoid liability after the sale.**
- 

## I bought a car or someone gave me one as a gift. When do I have to transfer ownership into my name?

After buying or getting a vehicle as a gift, you have **15 days** to do this. If you do not, these are the penalties:

- \$50 on the 16th day.
- \$2 a day after the 16th day, up to \$125.

If you buy from a Washington state dealer, they will take care of the transfer. If you buy from a private owner or an out-of-state dealer, you may need to do it.

## How much does transferring ownership cost?

Contact a [vehicle licensing office](#). Visit <https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/vehoffices/> to find one near you.

## What information do I need to transfer ownership?

- **The car is less than ten years old:** You must fill out the Odometer Disclosure section on the Title. Most titles have an Odometer Disclosure section.
- **The car is more than ten years old:** you do not have to report the Odometer miles.

## I do not have the Title. How do I get the Odometer Disclosure form?

- Visit a [vehicle licensing office](#). Check <https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/vehoffices/> to find one near you.
- Call 360.902.3770. They will mail it to you within two business days.
- Email [CustomerCare@dol.wa.gov](mailto:CustomerCare@dol.wa.gov) to request the Odometer Disclosure form. Give your name and mailing address. They will mail it to you within two business days.

## What forms must I fill out?

- [Vehicle/Vessel Bill of Sale](#) - You and the seller fill this out. You must enter the sale price to calculate the [use tax](#). Enter zero if it is a gift or an inheritance.
- [Vehicle Title Application](#) - Sign in front of one of these:
  - Notary public.
  - Licensing agent at an [office](#). Visit <https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/vehoffices/> to find one near you.
- The current vehicle title

You might also have to submit:

- Emissions testing report
- Affidavit of Loss/Release of Interest
- Odometer Disclosure Statement

## Where do I submit the forms and payment?

You can hand deliver or mail your forms and payment to a [vehicle licensing office](#). (Visit <https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/vehoffices/> to find one near you.) It takes eight to ten weeks this way. If you need it faster, hand-deliver or mail everything to a [Quick Title office](#). (Visit <https://www.dol.wa.gov/vehicleregistration/quick-title-offices.html> to find one near you.) This costs **\$50, plus** title fees.

- 
- ❖ Quick titles are not available for vehicles reported as stolen, insurance or wrecker-destroyed vehicles, or vehicles with "WA Rebuilt" on the title.
- 

---

This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice.

© 2020 Northwest Justice Project — 1-888-201-1014.

(Permission for copying and distribution granted to the Alliance for Equal Justice and to individuals for non-commercial purposes only.)