

Created by American Bar Association
State Justice Project

Problems Getting Title to My Vehicle

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- ❖ Read this **only** if you live in the state of Washington.
 - ❖ You can find all the fact sheets we link to here at WashingtonLawHelp.org.
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How do I normally get proof of vehicle ownership?

A vehicle's buyer and seller must both turn paperwork in to the [Washington Department of Licensing \(DOL\)](#) **within five days of the vehicle's sale**. The seller signs over the title to you. The DOL then issues you a new title.

If you are paying on the car, the title lists you as the registered owner and the seller as the legal owner until you finish making payments. Read [Reporting the Sale or Transfer of Your Car](#) to learn more.

What if the seller lost the title?

A seller who has lost or misplaced the title can apply for a new copy and sign it over to you. The seller should use DOL's [Affidavit of Loss form](#) at the end of this fact sheet.

What if the title is in some other registered or legal owner's name?

You can ask the last registered or legal owner to sign and file a [Release of Interest](#). The DOL form is at the end of this fact sheet.

Example: You finished making your payments on the car. You can ask the legal owner to sign and file a release of interest.



How else can I get title?

If you cannot get title from a seller or other person you got the vehicle from, you have 3 options to apply for “**ownership in doubt:**”

- You can ask DOL to issue a three-year **registration without title**. This converts to full ownership (giving you the title) if after three years nobody contests (challenges) the vehicle’s ownership.
- You can file a bond with DOL for a three-year period and get a **bonded title**. The bond amount must be equal to one and a half times the vehicle’s value.
- You can file a petition in court for an order awarding you legal ownership of the vehicle. [Quieting Title to Your Vehicle](#) has forms and instructions.

When should I ask DOL for a registration without title or a bonded title?

These procedures apply when

- The seller never gave you title or never had the title, **and**
- No other known person claims to own the vehicle.

It is easiest and cheapest if you get a three-year registration without title, and then wait for three years to get a full title.

The [DOL Bonded Title or Three Year Registration without Title Affidavit form](#) is at the end of this fact sheet.

Should I file a court action?

Sometimes, going to court is the only option when:

- The person who sold you the car failed to file the bill of sale and transfer title and still claims ownership.
- The used car dealer that sold you the car, whose name is on the title, went out of business.

- The lender of your car loan went out of business.

[Quieting Title to Your Vehicle](#) has more information, forms and instructions.

The court awarded me the vehicle in my divorce. My ex disappeared or refuses to give me title. What can I do?

It depends on if your final divorce order had the car's ownership information in it:

- Year, make, and model
- VIN (Vehicle Identification Number)

If it has this information, you do not need to go back to court. You do need a certified copy of the Final Divorce Order from the clerk of the court that entered it.

My Final Divorce Order has that information. What do I do?

Get a certified copy of your Final Divorce Order from the court clerk. There is a small fee.

Take the certified copy to your local [Department of Licensing vehicle licensing office](#). (Visit <https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/vehoffices/>.) They will transfer title into your name.

My Final Divorce Order does not have that information. Now what?

You should file a Motion for Clarification of Final Divorce Order to add this ownership information to the decree:

- Year, make, & model
- VIN (Vehicle Identification Number)

[Filing a Motion for Clarification of Final Divorce Order to Get Title to Your Vehicle](#) has forms and instructions.



Get Legal Help

- **Outside King County**, call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 am - 12:15 pm.
- **In King County**, call 2-1-1 weekdays between 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. 211 will identify and refer you to a legal aid provider.
- **Seniors (age 60 and over)** can also call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111, statewide.
- You can also **apply online** with CLEAR*Online: nwjustice.org/get-legal-help.

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

This information is current as of August 2020.

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Affidavit of Loss/Release of Interest

When completed, mail or take this form to any vehicle licensing office. **If mailing, you must have your signature notarized.**

License plate/Registration number		Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) or Vessel Hull Identification Number (HIN)		
Model year	Make	Model	Body style	

Affidavit of loss – Signature must be notarized or certified

Check all that apply
 I do not have the following:
 Title Registration Tab Decal Plates Metal tag

It is not in my possession because it was:
 Destroyed Illegible Lost Stolen Defaced and can no longer be used

I certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state of Washington that the foregoing is true and correct. If signing for a business, I have full authority to do so.

PRINT Name	PRINT Name
Position and company name, if signing for a business	Position and company name, if signing for a business
(Area code) Telephone Washington driver license number	(Area code) Telephone Washington driver license number
Email	Email
Date and place (city or county) signed	Date and place (city or county) signed
X Signature	X Signature

Release of interest – Signature must be notarized or certified

What are you releasing (check all that apply)
 I am releasing interest in the following for the vehicle or vessel described above.
 Ownership Gross weight license Personalized plate

I certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state of Washington that the foregoing is true and correct. If signing for a business, I have full authority to do so.

PRINT Name	PRINT Name
Position and company name, if signing for a business	Position and company name, if signing for a business
(Area code) Telephone Washington driver license number	(Area code) Telephone Washington driver license number
Email	Email
Date and place (city or county) signed	Date and place (city or county) signed
X Signature	X Signature

Notarization/Certification – You don't need your signature notarized if you sign in front of a WA vehicle licensing agent, who can certify your signature.

State of _____ County of _____

Signed or attested before me on _____ by _____
Name of person(s) signing this document

(Seal or stamp) _____

Notary/Agent/Subagent signature

Notary printed or stamped name

Title _____ and _____
Dealer or county/office number or notary expiration date



Bonded Title or Three-Year Registration Without Title Affidavit

Plate/Tab/Decal or Registration number		Vehicle identification number (VIN) or Vessel hull identification number (HIN)	
Model Year	Make	Model	Previous titling/registering jurisdiction

I am applying for: (check one) Bonded Washington title (attach a copy of the bond)
 Three-year registration without title

because satisfactory evidence of ownership for the above described vehicle or vessel is unavailable. RCW 46.12.680, WAC 308-56A-210 and WAC 308-93-440

I understand and agree that an unrestricted title will not be issued for a period of three years. If there are no claims contesting my ownership to this vehicle within three years of the date of this application, an unrestricted title will be issued to the legal owner upon proper application.

I certify I am the rightful owner of this vehicle/vessel having obtained ownership from the last rightful owner. The circumstances under which I obtained ownership and the reasons satisfactory evidence of ownership is unavailable are:

 PRINT or TYPE Applicant name

 PRINT or TYPE Applicant name

X
 Signature _____ Date _____

X
 Signature _____ Date _____

Notarization/Certification – You don’t need your signature notarized if you sign in front of a WA vehicle licensing agent, who can certify your signature.

State of _____ County of _____

Signed or attested before me on _____ by _____
 Name of person(s) signing this document

(Seal or stamp)

 Notary/Agent/Subagent signature

 Notary printed or stamped name

Title _____ and _____
 Dealer or county/office number or notary expiration date