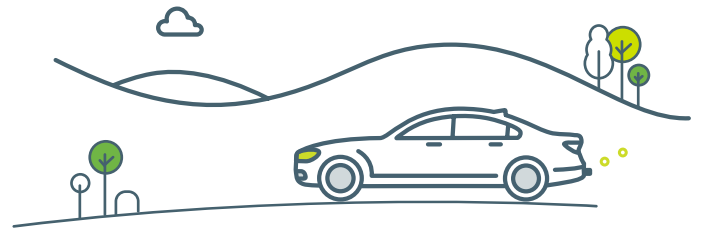


Everything you've always wanted to know about number plates



Car registration plates: from personalised number plates to the priciest plates of all time, here's everything you need to know and more...



First things first: what is a number plate and why do we have one?



Brought into legislation in 1903 by the Motor Car Act, number plates show that a car is officially registered and consists of a series of letters and numbers that sit at the front and back of a car. In the UK, number plates placed at the front of a vehicle are white, and at the back, yellow. Why? These colours allow other drivers to assess at a glance if they're looking at the front or rear of a vehicle.

How do you read a number plate?

The first two letters represent the area code. These are regional identifiers, determined by the area a vehicle has been registered in. For example, a car with a number plate beginning with HA-HW will have been registered in Hampshire and Dorset.

The first two numbers represent the vehicle's age. The two numbers represent the year the car was registered. To read this correctly, you've got to factor in the two new registration periods in March and September. Those registered with March's number plates will feature the last two digits of the year. September number plates will be the same, plus 50.

The last few letters are randomly generated, so they don't really mean that much.

What is the donned green symbol? If you see a number plate that was registered after 1 March 2021 with a donned green symbol on the edge, you've spotted an electric vehicle and won yourself some number plate bingo bonus points! This was introduced to raise awareness of electric vehicles and encourage motorists to make the switch to more environmentally friendly vehicles.

And for the really old cars or those well-loved vintage vehicles, if you spot a number plate which uses three numbers and three letters, it will pre-date 2001. The letter at the beginning identifies the year of registration and the last two letters, the location.



What about the future of number plates?

Although current number plates are set to continue until 2099, we may see features evolve as technology develops. For example, some parts of the world are already creating number plates with microchips embedded, containing [chassis numbers](#), owner's personal identification information, past traffic offences and contact information.

This means if you wanted to change your number plates, you'd simply request this change and have it take place wirelessly. It would also stop thieves from stealing number plates and putting them on their own vehicles to cover up crimes. Plus, if a vehicle was reported as stolen, the number plate will flash a warning message calling for attention. Whilst this isn't planned to be rolled out in the UK any time soon, we could one day have these features in place.

As part of the government's campaign to encourage more people to make the switch to electric, [the Department for Transport has said green plates could "unlock a number of incentives for drivers"](#). It's hoped this will be rolled out in the very near future, and depending on where you live could include access to bus lanes; free entry into zero-emissions zones; and free or discounted parking. For example, [Nottingham City Council has been trialling an Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicle \(ULEV\) lane since 2018](#).

10 surprising facts about number plates



Did you know, there's a lot of interesting stats and facts about number plates that most people aren't aware of? Impress your friends, kids, and backseat drivers as we reveal some of our favourite facts and stats about number plates ...

1. Initially, number plates were made up of three letters and a random number

While this made them great for personalisation by matching with the owners' initials, in the 1950's they began running out of combinations and so switched the numbers to come first.

2. The most expensive plate in the UK is '25 0', worth £518,000

But why '25 0'? The number plate was [purchased by a Ferrari trader at auction to put on his rare Ferrari 250 SWB](#), previously owned by Eric Clapton and valued somewhere around £10 million.

3. 'F1' is the second most expensive number plate in the UK

Formally recognised for its connection with Formula One, it was bought by entrepreneur Afzal Khan for £440,000. [It's rumoured since that he's turned down an offer of £6 million for the pricy plate.](#)

4. In March 2022, the DVLA banned 343 number plates for being too rude

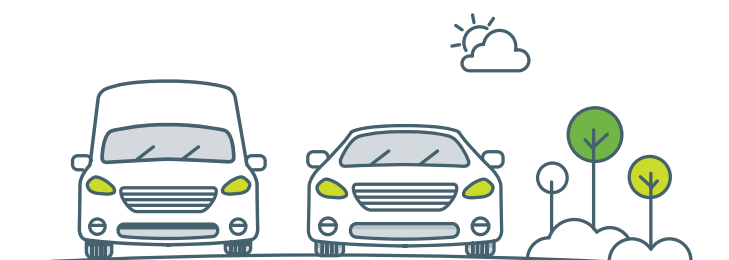
Among the culprits are [references to Covid-19 such as 'CO22 ONA' and those which could be deemed offensive such as 'BE22 END' and 'A22 HLE'](#).

5. £7.25 million – the cost of the most expensive plate in the world

Unsurprisingly, '1' takes the number one spot as the most expensive plate in the world. This single digit plate [sold for a whopping £7.25 million in a 2008 auction](#). The owner? A business man from a very wealthy Dubai family called Abdul Ghaffar Khouri. He bought the number 1 plate purely because it was 'the best number to own' – worth £7.25 million? We'd rather a private jet or super yacht but each to their own!

6. 20 meters – the distance all motorists must be able to read a number plate from

[Fewer than half of motorists surveyed by DVLA know they must be able to read a number plate from 20 metres away in order to drive safely.](#)



7. Robbie Williams was 'S8RRY'

When the singer and songwriter Robbie Williams decided to splash out on a Ferrari, it hit a nerve with fans who felt the new purchase was a tad too flashy for his brand. So, he found a unique way of apologising: [by buying the personalised number plate 'S8 RRY' for it](#). While this certainly got the message across, perhaps his fans would've felt more forgiving had he sold the car ...

8. 'A1' – the first number plate ever registered

This famous number plate was [registered in London when the system was first introduced by the Motor Car Act in 1903, and was claimed by the Earl Russel](#). Or rather, it was claimed by his butler, who was commanded to queue overnight at the London County Council to receive it.

9. There're more than 45 million personalised number plates in the UK with sales going up every year

[That's 2 for every 3 people in the country!](#) Most are actually used on cars while some are bought purely for investment and are safely tucked away. It's a common myth that personalised plates are bought only by the rich and wealthy for their supercars, when in fact they're mainly used on more mainstream brands such as VW, Ford, Peugeot, and Renault. This shows that personalised plates can be a fun and quirky purchase for anyone, regardless of income or class.

10. £1000 – how much you'll be fined for getting it wrong

Finally, if you decide to join the 45 million people in the UK with a personalised number plate, make sure it's legal. Numbers and letters must be exactly 79 millimetres tall, spaced at the correct distance, so they remain visible from a distance, and in a specific 'Charles Wright' font. Failing to play by the rules [could see you hit with a £1000 fine](#).



LV=
BROKER