

Report the selling or buying of a vehicle

Author

Northwest Justice Project

Last Review Date

April 8, 2025

Learn to file a Report of Sale after you buy, sell or otherwise transfer a vehicle. When you don't report the sale of a vehicle, there can be unexpected consequences. Learn how to avoid those unexpected consequences.

1. After you sell, give away, or transfer a vehicle

I have sold, gifted or transferred my vehicle. What do I do next?

First, try to fill out a [Bill of Sale](https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065/download?inline) (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065/download?inline>) with the buyer. This form is not required but will help you gather the information you will need to transfer ownership. You can also get the Bill of Sale form in [Russian](https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065-ru/download?inline) (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065-ru/download?inline>), [Spanish](https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065-es/download?inline) (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065-es/download?inline>), and [Vietnamese](https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065-es/download?inline) (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065-es/download?inline>), and [Vietnamese](https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065-es/download?inline) (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065-es/download?inline>).

(<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065-vi/download?inline>).

The optional Bill of Sale is **not the same thing** as the Report of Sale form. The Report of Sale form is **required**.

Then you legally transfer ownership of the vehicle by signing the title (the vehicle certificate of ownership) and giving it to the new owner. If the vehicle is less than 10 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 vehicle and deliver the title to the new owner if they are making payments. Even though you have to report the sale of the vehicle right away, you can remain the legal owner on the title until the vehicle is fully paid off.

After you have signed the title for the sale, you should give the Department of Licensing (DOL) a written Report of Sale **within 5 days**. Don't count Saturdays, Sundays, or state and federal holidays. If you don't file this report on time, you may still have criminal or civil responsibility for the vehicle despite the sale. It costs a small fee to file the report (less than \$20).

How do I file a Report of Sale?

You can:

- **File it online:** Complete a Report of Sale form on the DOL website (<https://dol.wa.gov/vehicles-and-boats/vehicle-registration/report->

vehicle-sale). You can get the Report of Sale form in in English (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420062/download?inline>), Russian (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420062ru/download?inline>), Spanish (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420062sp-usa/download?inline>), and Vietnamese (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420062vt/download?inline>).

- **File it in person:** Take the Report of Sale form to your local auto licensing office (<https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/vehoffices/>). You can tear the report of sale form off from the vehicle's "certificate of ownership" (title). You can also get a copy of the form (https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view?combine=&field_topic_target_id=All&field_language_target) at any auto licensing office.

If you submit your Report of Sale in-person, you get a receipt. You can use this receipt 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.

Don't mail your Report of Sale to the Department of Licensing in Olympia if you can avoid it. You won't get a receipt.

Make sure the DOL 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 vehicle. You may lose the chance to fix a mistake.

You **can** submit a Report of Sale after 5 business days **but** the DOL might treat a late filing as improperly filed. Filing on time protects you from parking tickets, towing charges, and any accidents that happen after you sell or

transfer your vehicle.

What do I put in the Report of Sale?

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

If you can't provide this information, the DOL may decide your Report of Sale is improperly filed.

When do I need to file a Report of Sale?

You need to file a Report of Sale when:

- **Selling your vehicle**- Anytime you sell your vehicle to anyone even if they are outside of Washington.
- **Giving, donating or trading your vehicle**- Any time you give your vehicle away, donate it, trade it in at a vehicle dealer (with no money exchanged), 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.
- **A court ordered you to give the vehicle to someone**- If a court awards the vehicle to someone else in a court order, you will need to report the transfer as a gift or trade.

- **Selling your vehicle to a wrecking yard or for parts-** Even if you are selling your vehicle for scrap or parts, you still have to file a Report of Sale. If you are totally junking your vehicle for disposal, you will still need to report the transfer.
- **Turning over your vehicle to an insurance company-** After a wreck if your insurance company totals out your vehicle and takes it from you, you need to file a Report of Sale.

You should file a report of sale anytime you sell, gift, give, transfer, or trade your vehicle. File it within **5 business days** from the date of sale.

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 don't have a receipt, you can get a copy of your Report of Sale from the Department of Licensing with a Vehicle/Boat Record Request (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/224003/download?inline>). You can also call the Department of Licensing at (360) 902-3770 and ask them to mail you the form. Mail the completed Vehicle/Boat Record Request (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/224003/download?inline>) form to the address listed on it. It doesn't cost anything to request a record.

2. If the buyer is making payments

I sold my vehicle. 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. The date of sale would be the date that you gave the buyer physical possession of the vehicle for the first (or biggest) of the payments.

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

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 DOL 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 making payments on the vehicle. Am I responsible for accidents, parking tickets or towing charges during this time?

No, not if you properly reported the sale right after the sale. You must report the sale within 5 business days of the sale. Liability should pass to the buyer

once you report the sale. If you fail to report the sale, there could be liability issues.

- **Tickets** - If the buyer became the vehicle's registered owner at the same time you reported its sale, there is little chance that you will mistakenly get a ticket.
- **Accidents**- If the buyer is in an accident in the vehicle while they are still making payments on it, typically liability will be on the buyer (or drivers of the vehicles involved). If you are concerned about liability related to a vehicle, you should check your insurance policy or get legal help.
- **Towing** - You and the buyer **both** get a notice from a towing company if they tow the vehicle. You get a notice only because you are the legal owner. This gives you a chance to pay the towing company to get the vehicle back if the buyer will not pay. You might want to. The vehicle is your security for the buyer's payments. It can cost more to leave a car in an impound lot the longer you leave it there.

If you don't want to pay to get the vehicle back, you will not be responsible for any extra charges if the towing company sells the vehicle **and** the sale amount is enough to cover the charges. But, you could be responsible if the amount received from the sale is not enough to cover the towing charges.

If the person buying the vehicle abandons it and it is towed away after you sold/transferred it, you will not be guilty of "littering of an abandoned vehicle", **if** you have properly filed a Report of Sale or Transfer. You also won't be responsible for the costs incurred in removing, storing, and disposing of it **so long as you filed the Report of Sale within 5 business days**.

3. After you buy or receive a vehicle

I bought a vehicle or was given one. When do I have to transfer ownership into my name?

After buying or getting a vehicle as a gift or otherwise being given a vehicle in any way (including through exchange, gift, lease, inheritance, or legal action) you have **15 days** to transfer ownership into your name. If you buy from a Washington state dealer, they should take care of the transfer. If you buy from a private owner or an out-of-state dealer, you may need to do it.

If you don't do this within **15 days** of getting the vehicle, there are serious consequences. The consequences can include money penalties and misdemeanor charges.

What information do I need to transfer ownership?

Try to fill out a Bill of Sale (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065/download?inline>) with the seller. This form is not required but will help you gather the information you will need to transfer ownership. You can also get the Bill of Sale form in Russian (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065-ru/download?inline>), Spanish (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065-es/download?inline>), and Vietnamese (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420065-vi/download?inline>).

The optional Bill of Sale is **not the same thing** as the Report of Sale form. The Report of Sale form is **required**.

The seller legally transfers ownership of the vehicle to you by signing the title (the vehicle certificate of ownership) and giving the title to you. If the vehicle is less than 10 years old, you must also fill out the odometer disclosure statement on the back of the title.

You will also need to pay to transfer ownership into your name on the title. It will be specific to where you are and the vehicle you sold. A local vehicle licensing office (<https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/vehoffices/>) can tell you how much it will cost.

What forms are required to transfer ownership to my name?

1. Vehicle Report of Sale - You and the seller fill this out and then the **seller turns it into the DOL** within 5 days of the sale. You must enter the sale price. Enter zero if it is a gift or an inheritance. You can get the Report of Sale form in in English (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420062/download?inline>), Russian (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420062ru/download?inline>), Spanish (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420062sp-usa/download?inline>), and Vietnamese (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420062vt/download?inline>).

For boats or floating vessels, you should use the Vessel Report of Sale (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420063/download?inline>) and

Vessel Title Application

(<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420289/download?inline>)

(<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420289/download?inline>) instead.

2. Vehicle Title Application – You can get the Vehicle Title Application form in English (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420001/download?inline>), Russian (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420001ru/download?inline>), Spanish (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420001sp-usa/download?inline>), and Vietnamese (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420001vt/download?inline>).

Don't sign your Vehicle Title Application when you first fill it out. Your Vehicle Title Application will have to be signed by you **when you are in front of either:**

- A Notary public or
- A Licensing agent at a DOL office

3. The current vehicle title that was signed by the seller

You might also have to submit:

- Affidavit of Loss/Release of Interest (<https://dol.wa.gov/forms/view/420040/download?inline>) if you are trying to replace a lost title or release your interest in a vehicle
- Odometer Disclosure Statement if your vehicle is less than 10 years old and the title doesn't have an odometer section

Emissions tests are no longer required in any county in Washington. It is still illegal to drive a vehicle with modified emissions equipment or a vehicle that smokes while you drive it.

I don't have the Title. How do I get the Odometer Disclosure form?

- Visit a vehicle licensing office.
- Call 360-902-3770. They will mail it to you within 2 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.

Where do I submit the forms and payment?

You can hand deliver or mail your forms and payment to a local vehicle licensing office (<https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/vehoffices/>). It takes 8 to 10 weeks this way. If you need it faster, hand-deliver or mail everything to a local Quick Title office (<https://dol.wa.gov/appointments-locations/quick-title-offices>). The fee for a Quick Title costs **\$86 for vehicles and \$77 for boats, plus the regular title fees** you will have to pay for the title itself.

Quick titles are not available for vehicles reported as stolen, insurance or wrecker-destroyed vehicles, or vehicles with "WA Rebuilt" on the title. Quick titles are also not available for snowmobiles or out of state vehicles/boats.

WashingtonLawHelp.org gives general information. It is not legal advice. Find organizations that provide free legal help on our [Get legal help](#) page.