



The Trafford Crime Prevention Panels

The Car Buyer's Guide

This guide was compiled by the Greater Manchester Police Stolen Vehicle Squad

40% of all stolen cars are not recovered - many are disguised by the thief and sold to innocent purchasers. This guide aims to protect you from buying a stolen car. Please follow this advice to protect yourself.

Research

- Decide what model you are interested in.
- Find out where the vehicle's identification numbers should be.
- Consider taking an independent qualified vehicle examiner with you.

Private Advertisements

- Can you identify the vendor? - Beware of mobile telephone numbers, which may not be traceable.
- Beware of between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. type adverts. Is it a phone box? Try calling outside the specified hours.
- Does the vendor hold the vehicle registration document and MOT certificate. If not, why not?
- Always arrange to view the car in daylight at the vendor's home - satisfy yourself it is their home.
- Never allow them to bring the vehicle to your home, or meet you at some other location.

The Vendor

- Is the vendor familiar with the vehicle and its controls?
- What insurance premiums has he or she paid? Ask to see a current certificate of insurance.
- Is the vendor the registered keeper? If not, why not?
- Hold the registration document up to the light - it should have a watermark. Forgeries normally do not.

Registration Plates

- Do they appear newer than the car?
- Are there too many screw holes?
- Do the registration plates appear to have been taken off at any time?

If any answers are **Yes**, ask why! Remember, most registration plates display a dealer's name.

Windows

- Are there any dealer stickers displayed on the windows. If there are none, ask why! Dealers like free advertisements.
- Check carefully beneath stickers, where fitted. They are often used to conceal etching.
- Are the windows etched with the correct registration or part vehicle identification number?
- Have any areas of glass been scratched off? Check all glass, including head lamps, tail lamps and sun roofs.
- Have any of the windows been broken and replaced? If so, under what circumstances?

Vehicle Identification Numbers

Look for the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) plate.

- Does it match the registration document?
- Does it appear to have been interfered with?
- Have the rivets been disturbed?
- Has the VIN plate been removed? If so, ask why!

Find the stamped-in vehicle identification number.

- Check the surrounding area for signs of any alteration.
- The 17 digits should be evenly and levelly stamped, and match the registration document.

Check the engine number.

- Does it match the registration document?
- Has it been interfered with, or altered?
- Has the engine been changed?

Locks and Security

- Does the car have a working security alarm system?
- Do the locks differ? Thieves often change locks they have damaged.
- Do any of the door locks or surrounding areas appear to have been damaged? - signs of a forced entry.
- Check the locking petrol cap - has it been forced or replaced?

Final Advice

If you buy a vehicle which is subsequently found to be stolen, apart from problems you may have explaining your actions to the police, you will have no right in law to ownership of that vehicle.

You will lose both the car and the money you paid for it.

- Be **sure** before you buy.
- **Never** feel pressured into buying.
- **Never** pay cash.
- Always remember - "**Let the buyer beware**".
- If in doubt, **walk away**,