

Vehicle Registration Plates

To be fully legal, number plates must:-

- ✓ Be the correct size and use the correct font, spacing and letter size (see the back page for specifics)
- ✓ Be made of reflective material and display black characters (they can be 3D but not shadow or italic) on a white/yellow background without any background pattern or invalid logo or emblems (only the EU or country flag is allowed).
- ✓ Be marked with the British Standard mark (BS AU 145d) to show it complies and also the supplier name and postcode.
- ✓ Use colours for any screw cover to **match** the area behind, i.e. yellow on yellow, black on black etc..
- ✓ Not be altered in any way, such as tinted (which never complies with the standards or regulations)
- ✓ in other words look like all other legal plates on the majority of cars on the road
- ✓ *Motorcycles vary slightly - see the back page*

There are numerous offences relating to number plates, all of which result in £100 fine at the roadside or up to £1,000 in court. We can also make referrals to the DVLA (usually an officers statement accompanied by photographic evidence) where they will consider taking action themselves, which can include permanently withdrawing the number plate from use (including private plates). **You should note that the offences are per plate and not per car, therefore if your front and back plates are illegal, it could be dealt with as 2x £100 fines.**

Number plate doesn't conform - this can be for failing to comply with any of the required conditions in the list above but is usually people using 'show plates' with illegal spacing and/or mis-shaped characters, such as intentionally making a 5 appear as an S. It can also be when people intentionally use a contrasting rather than matching colour screw cover (often where there isn't even any hole or screw to cover) to make an 11 appear as an H for example like the one shown here (which also has illegal spacing - actual reg starts T11E.....) The majority of these altered plates were specifically purchased with that intention.



See the back of this page for the relevant legislation covering Vehicle Registration Marks (number plates)



This sheet only covers registration plates after 2001 - for the old style prior to that and also trailers there are some small differences such as plate and font size – enquire online for questions regarding these.

Number plate not displayed - this is where a number plate is missing (usually the front), often accompanied with a claim that it 'just fell off'. Whilst this will sometimes be true, we have ways of checking this and ultimately it would be down the officers decision whether or not to take any action.

Number plate not easily readable - this could be due to the way it is displayed (tucked into the dashboard behind the window for example), the display angle (for example angled upwards), being covered in dirt or otherwise blocked/covered, or any other reason which could apply.



Keep a vehicle on a road with plate obscured - this is similar to the above but relates to vehicles kept on public roads where the number plate is obscured or not easily distinguishable and does not require any movement, or even anyone present with it.

But my car passed it's MOT with the same plate?

An obviously illegal plate should **fail** an MOT however it may be the tester didn't notice, or the faults were quite subtle. Passing an MOT simply means the checkable items are found to be in order and the car deemed safe - it does not necessarily mean the car is fully legal.

What is the British Standard used?

There are numerous tests involved, including checking:

- ✓ the white/yellow/black colours to ensure the correct chromaticity and luminance using a special machine
- ✓ resistance to bending, weathering, heat, solvents, dirt, corrosion and impact.
- ✓ Retroreflection, measured at 6 different angles both dry and wet.

Why can't the front plate be in my window?

Regulations state the plate must be **on** and not **in** the vehicle, it must also be placed on the **front** and vertical or if not reasonably practicable, as vertical as possible.

I don't agree, can I appeal?

As with all offences, you can request a court appearance where the magistrates will decide on the outcome.



The Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulations 2001

6. (1) This regulation applies to vehicles, other than works trucks, road rollers and agricultural machines, first registered on or after the relevant date.
- (2) Except as provided in paragraph (5), a registration plate must be fixed on the front of the vehicle in the manner required by paragraph (3).
- (3) This paragraph requires the plate to be fixed—
- (a) vertically or, where not reasonably practicable, in a position as close to the vertical as reasonably practicable,
 - (b) in such a position that in normal daylight the characters of the registration mark are easily distinguishable from every part of a relevant area having the diagonal length specified in paragraph (4).
- (4) The diagonal length of the relevant area is—
- (a) in the case of a mark having characters the width of which is at least 57 millimetres, 22 metres,
 - (b) in the case of a mark having characters the width of which is 50 millimetres, 21.5 metres,
 - (c) in the case of a mark having characters the width of which is 44 millimetres, 18 metres.
11. (1) No reflex-reflecting material may be applied to any part of a registration plate and the plate must not be treated in such a way that the characters of the registration mark become, or are caused to act as, retroreflective characters.
- (2) A registration plate must not be treated in any other way which renders the characters of the registration mark less easily distinguishable to the eye or which would prevent or impair the making of a true photographic image of the plate through the medium of camera and film or any other device.
- (3) A registration plate must not be fixed to a vehicle—
- (a) by means of a screw, bolt or other fixing device of any type or colour,
 - (b) by the placing of a screw, bolt or other fixing device in any position, or
 - (c) in any other manner, which has the effect of changing the appearance or legibility of any of the characters of the registration mark, which renders the characters of the registration mark less easily distinguishable to the eye or which prevents or impairs the making of a true photographic image of the plate through the medium of camera and film or any other device.
19. (1) For the purposes of section 59(1) of the Act (regulations: offences), the person responsible for complying with these Regulations is the person driving the vehicle or, where it is not being driven, the person keeping it.

Number plate size and spacing rules:

All characters must have a 14mm stroke (font width), be 79mm tall and 50mm wide, except for the letter I or number 1. Their must be 11mm spacing between each character and a 33mm gap between the age identifier and random letters. Margins on all 4 sides of the plate must be 11mm (so no cutting down).

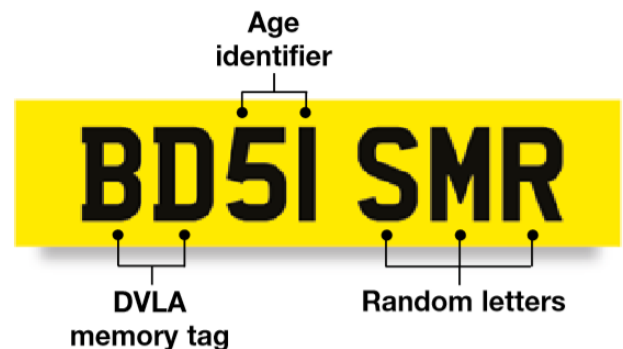
Vertical space (if on set on 2 lines) between the age identifier and random letters must be 19mm

The memory tag relates to the area the vehicle was first registered in (Essex use EA-EY).

If you want to display the optional European symbol and GB national identifier it must be the approved symbol and at least 98mm tall by between 40-50mm wide. The background must be reflective blue with 12 reflective yellow stars. The GB must be in reflective white or yellow.

For Motorcycle plates (after 1973), they must be set on 2 lines and have characters 64mm tall and 44mm wide (except I and 1) with a stroke of 10mm. The space between characters must be 10mm, with 13mm vertical space between the age identifier and random letters. The margins on all sides must be 11mm.

You can also choose to display a national flag and identifying letters to the left hand side (instead of the EU) being either a Union Jack, the Cross of St George, Cross of St Andrew (also known as Saltire) or Red Dragon of Wales - see the leaflet below for full details and restrictions.



For more information go to www.gov.uk/displaying-number-plates where you can also download DVLA information leaflet 'INF104' (which contains full details and rules for pre 2001 and other plates).