

Top 10 ways to avoid buying a stolen vehicle:

1. Carefully examine the public VIN plate on the dash of the vehicle.

- Compare the number to the one found on the registration. Also, check the manufacturer's label on the driver's door or the driver's door frame beside the latch and compare the VIN on that label with the public VIN. If the label is missing or is scratched out, there is a problem.

2. Ask for proof of ownership and identification from the seller.

- Compare photo identification to the name on the vehicle's registration document and make sure they are the same. Record the seller's driver's license number and contact information on the bill of sale.

3. Check the VIN on the public Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) website.

- The web address: www.cpic-cipc.ca
- Remember, Alberta Registries WILL NOT tell you if the vehicle is stolen. The CPIC check is free and will tell you to contact police if there's something wrong with the VIN.

4. Consider online services such as CARFAX or CARPROOF.

- Pay particular attention to a vehicle's registration history. If the vehicle goes back and forth several times between Provinces and/or States, it may be a clone (a stolen vehicle disguised with a duplicate VIN number from a legitimate vehicle). Also look for any noted color changes and/or odometer discrepancies.

5. GOOGLE the VIN.

- If the vehicle is listed for sale in another Province or another Country, the listing may appear on Google indicating the possibility of a clone.

6. Have a Vehicle Information Report (VIR) done at Registries.

- This will notify you of any liens, as well as the status of the vehicle. REMEMBER: this is NOT a stolen vehicle check!

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7. Bring a friend.

- It's always a good idea to have another set of eyes to witness the transaction and corroborate any discussions with the seller.

8. Question low sale prices

- If the asking price is too good to be true, ask why. Be suspicious if the seller demands cash. It's a good idea to complete any cash transactions at a financial institution.

9. Keep detailed records of the transaction.

- Retain original copies of bills of sale, registrations, service records etc.

10. Do not allow your desire to buy the vehicle override your intuition.

Your best weapon is your brain. Use common sense, imagination, and good judgment.