

Buying a Car with No Papers

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Have you spotted a car that looks too good to be true, with the only caveat being that it comes without papers? In most cases, it's best to steer clear of any car that doesn't come with registration papers, but there are a handful of exceptions. You may be able to, for example, buy a car and rebuild it legally. You could also re-register the car. But in 99% of cases, you will find these purchases are more trouble than they are worth.

Firstly, before you even make a decision about buying the car or not, you will need a police clearance certificate to make sure that the vehicle is not stolen. This will be an extremely tricky and lengthy process without registration papers, but is still possible. If you do buy a vehicle without clearance, you will be liable for hefty fines as it is illegal to buy stolen goods. The onus is on you as the buyer to ensure that the seller is the lawful owner.

If the owner has merely lost his papers, he can apply for a duplicate for a minimal fee. He should also be able to point you in the direction of the last owner with registration papers. It may take detective work, but it's much better than getting on the wrong side of the law.

Once you've determined that the car has not been stolen, you will need to get it weighed at a weighing station and complete a roadworthy for re-registration.

You may also rebuild a car and register it.

This is the route you would usually take with a classic car or a Code 3 car (i.e. an insurance write-off).

You will need to present receipts for engines, the chassis, the labour and all other parts. The expenses of a rebuild can be significant.

In order to reregister a car using various new parts, you will need a duly completed application form RLV, an SA ID and an affidavit from SOA stating which parts were used, where they were acquired and with the receipts attached.

In the event of a Code 3 or unfit vehicle that has been deregistered, the deregistration certificate or evidence of the vehicle being permanently unfit for use needs to be attached. You will also need a police clearance certificate and mass measuring certificate.

The process can be extremely lengthy and time intensive. Expect to stand in a lot of queues and to spend a lot of time and money.

If you are buying a **rare classic without papers** in order to rebuild it as a passion project, it is feasible.

But if you are eyeing a second-hand car without papers because it's extremely cheap and seems like a bargain – it's probably going to result in a major headache very soon after purchasing it.

It's important to insist on all the relevant paperwork when buying a second-hand car.

"There are great bargains out there, but it's important to perform due diligence. A lower price is not worth the risk of a fine and possible jail time because you cannot get the car registered or cleared".