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Current Requirements on the Display of Number Plates



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In Brief

All registration marks including marks purchased through DVLA's sales scheme must be displayed in accordance with The Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulations 2001 (obtainable from Her Majesty's Stationery Office).

Rules for the display of number plates are set out in law, briefly these are: -

- A number plate must be displayed at the front and rear of motor vehicles (with some exceptions).
- Number Plates must be easy to read and meet the [British Standard](#).
- Lettering should be black on a white plate at the front and a yellow at the rear.
- The background surface should be reflex-reflecting but the characters must not.
- There are separate requirements for [traditional number plates](#) displayed on vehicles constructed before 1 January 1973.
- Lettering and spacing must be of a set size. They must conform to one of the groups shown at: [Number plates](#)

[fitted after 1 September 2001](#) or [Number plates fitted before 1 September 2001](#).

[Common Questions and Answers](#)

NUMBER PLATES FITTED AFTER 1 SEPTEMBER 2001

Number plates fitted after 1 September 2001 must display characters that meet the dimensions shown below.

Characters	
Height	79mm
Width (except the figure 1 or letter I)	50mm
Stroke	14mm
Space between characters	11mm
Space between groups	33mm
Top, bottom and side margins (minimum)	11mm
Space between vertical lines	19mm

The character width has been slightly reduced from 57mm to 50mm to accommodate the Euro-symbol on the number plate.

NUMBER PLATES FITTED BEFORE 1 SEPTEMBER 2001

Number plates fitted before 1 September 2001 must display characters that meet the dimensions shown in one of the two groups below

Characters	Group 1	Group 2
Height	89mm	79mm
Width (except the figure 1 or letter I)	64mm	57mm
Stroke	16mm	14mm
Space between characters	13mm	11mm
Space between groups	38mm	33mm

Side margins (minimum)	13mm	11mm
Space between vertical lines	19mm	19mm

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TRADITIONAL NUMBER PLATES

- Vehicles constructed before 1.1.73 may display traditional style "black and white" plates i.e. white, silver or grey characters on a black plate.
- Lettering must be of a set size. It must conform to one of the two groups below.

Characters	Group 1	Group 2
Height	89mm	79mm
Width (except the number 1)	64mm	57mm
Stroke	16mm	14mm
Side margin	25mm	11mm
Top & bottom margin	13mm	11mm
Space between characters	13mm	11mm
Space between groups	38mm	33mm

- There are additional arrangements if the vehicle is a [motorcycle or tricycle](#)
- Traditional number plates fitted to vehicles manufactured before 1 January 1973 are not required to display the mandatory character font, but the characters must be easy to read.

[Common Questions and Answers](#)

Display of Vehicle Registration Marks on Imported Vehicles (which have a restricted space for a standard sized number plate)

Certain imported vehicles may be permitted to display number plates with smaller characters if:

- The vehicle does not have European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval
- AND
- The vehicle's construction/design cannot accomodate standard size number plates

Specifications for smaller sized plates (for certain imported vehicles)

Character Height	64mm
Character Width	44mm
Character Stroke	10mm
Space between characters	10mm

MOTORCYCLES AND TRICYCLES

- Motorcycles and tricycles registered after 1.9.2001 must only display a number plate at the rear of the vehicle.
- Motorcycles and tricycles registered before 1.9.2001 can display a number plate at the front but are not required to.
- The characters may be smaller e.g.

Character Height	64mm
Character Width	44mm
Character Stroke	10mm
Space between characters	10mm
Space between groups	30mm
Top, side & bottom margin	11mm
Space between vertical lines	13mm

- **Motorcycles registered on or after 1 September 2001 must display a two-line number plate number plate. Motorcycles registered prior to the 1 September 2001 may display a three-line plate, but one-line plates are illegal, irrespective of the date of registration of the motorcycle.**

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MANDATORY CHARACTER FONT

From 1 September 2001 all new number plates must display the new mandatory font. Combined with the new format registration mark, number plates will become clearer and easier to remember.

I 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
A B C D E F G H
J K L M N O P Q
R S T U V W X Y Z

Number plates fitted before 1 September 2001 need not be changed provided the character font used is substantially the same as the one shown above.

Number plates must be replaced if they have been customised with:

- Stylised letters and/or figures such as italics
- Number plate fixing bolts that alter the appearance of the letters and/or numbers

[Commons Questions and Answers](#)

THE EURO PLATE

Since 1st September 2001 there has been an optional provision for the display of a Euro-plate for vehicles registered in the UK. The Euro-plate is a number plate that incorporates the symbol of the European Union (a circle of 12 stars on a blue background) with the national identification letters of the member states below. This symbol is located on the far left-hand side of the number plate.



Vehicles displaying this symbol no longer have to use the traditional oval shaped national identifier (GB) sticker when travelling within the European Union. All vehicles registered in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have, by international convention, the distinguishing sign GB.

The Government announced on 28 December 2001 the intention to permit the display of national flags and national identifiers on vehicle number plates. The Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulations 2001 are in the process of being amended. They will provide for the voluntary display of the Union flag, Scottish Saltire, Cross of St George and Red Dragon. Football team crests etc are not allowed.

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THE LAW

The law states that,

- You must not alter, rearrange or misrepresent the letters or numbers
- Characters must not be moved from one group to the other (e.g. A242 ABC must not be displayed as A242A BC).

Offences may result in any or all of the following:

- A fine of up to £1,000
- The registration mark may be WITHDRAWN
- The vehicle may FAIL the MOT test

Full details of the requirements are included in The Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulations 2001

[Common Questions and Answers](#)

THE BRITISH STANDARD

The British Standard sets out the physical characteristics on the number plate. This includes:

- Visibility
- Strength
- Reflectivity

The British Standard also requires that a number plate must be marked with the following information: -

- The British Standard Number (currently BS AU 145d)
- The name, trade mark, or other means of identification of the manufacturer or component supplier. (The company who actually make the number plate.)
- The name and postcode of the supplying outlet. (The 'supplying outlet' is taken to mean a company whose business consists wholly or partly of selling number plates.)
- A non-reflective border and the Euro-symbol with the national identification letters are optional additions.
- There shall be no other markings or material contained on the number plate.

Further information about the British Standards requirements can be obtained at www.bsi-global.com.

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