



Wisconsin Used Car Buyer's Paperwork Checklist

Use this checklist to prepare for buying a used vehicle from a private seller in Wisconsin. Confirm the latest requirements with the Wisconsin Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) before completing your transaction.

KEY FACTS

State	Wisconsin
Agency	Wisconsin Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
Process	See official source
Notary required	No
Bill of sale	No
Odometer disclosure	Yes
Filing deadline	2 days
Last reviewed	May 13, 2026

QUICK REFERENCE

NOTARY No	BILL OF SALE No	ODOMETER Yes	INSPECTION Conditional
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IMPORTANT DEADLINES

Within 2 days

If the vehicle will be operated, Wisconsin requires the buyer to title and register it within 2 business days after purchase. This is an unusually strict deadline — buyers must act within 2 business days to legally operate the vehicle.

PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

Buyer checklist

- ☐ **Signed title from seller** **REQUIRED**
The seller must have signed the title over to you. Check that the odometer reading is noted.
- ☐ **Bill of sale** **RECOMMENDED**
Proof of purchase with VIN, price, and both parties' information.
- ☐ **Government-issued photo ID** **REQUIRED**
Required when submitting title transfer paperwork.
- ☐ **Payment for title transfer fees** **REQUIRED**
Fees vary by state. Check your state's official DMV fee schedule.
- ☐ **Proof of insurance** **REQUIRED**
Most states require proof of minimum liability insurance before issuing plates.
- ☐ **Sales tax payment** **CONDITIONAL**
Sales or use tax is typically due when registering the vehicle. Rate and basis vary by state.

Required forms

- ☐ **Signed title from seller** **REQUIRED**
The seller must sign the title over to you. Verify the VIN and odometer reading.
- ☐ **Title transfer application** **REQUIRED**
Form required to apply for a new title in your name. Requirements vary by state.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Notary: No — Wisconsin does not require notarization for private-party vehicle title transfers.

Bill of sale: No — A bill of sale is not required by Wisconsin law for private-party vehicle sales. The DMV provides one as a convenience form but it is not a legal requirement.



Odometer disclosure: Yes — Required by federal law for vehicles under 10 years old.

Inspection: Conditional — In the seven southeastern Wisconsin counties (Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Washington, Waukesha), emissions testing is required at change of ownership for vehicles more than 5 model years old. This is a buyer responsibility within 45 days of registration, not a seller pre-sale requirement.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

- 1 Run a vehicle history report (e.g., CARFAX or NMVTIS) before purchase.
- 2 Verify the seller's name matches the name on the title.
- 3 Ensure the title is free of liens or confirm the lien will be resolved.
- 4 Have the seller sign the title over to you and complete odometer disclosure.
- 5 Obtain a bill of sale from the seller.
- 6 Submit the signed title, application, fees, and proof of insurance to your state DMV.
- 7 Pay any applicable sales tax.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Not verifying that the seller is the titled owner.
- Failing to check for outstanding liens before purchase.
- Missing the deadline to register the vehicle after purchase.
- Not getting a bill of sale.

OFFICIAL SOURCES

Wisconsin DMV — Selling Your Vehicle<https://dot.wi.gov/Pages/dmv/vehicles/sll-jnk-vhcl/sellyourvehicle.aspx>**Wisconsin DMV**<https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/dmv/>