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How to Avoid License Plate Search Scams by [Zeus Smith](#)

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Almost 90% of the website online that claim to offer license plate search results are scammers that are only interested in taking your money while giving you junk results or no real information at all. A license plate search is one of the most common types of lookups that people search for online, which makes it very attractive for scammers to try to profit off of, despite the fact that vehicle registration information is not publicly available.

The good news is that consumers can go online to order a search, they just need to know what to be aware of and what sets a real search apart from a scam. Fake websites share some common traits and warning signs that can help you recognize a scam before you give out your personal details or pay money for useless results.

Don't place an order with a website that has no useful contact information. A legitimate business usually makes it easy for customers to get in touch because they actually want to develop a relationship with their clientele. Scam artist, on the other hand, do not want to be found. Look for a mailing address (not just a PO Box) or better yet, a phone number. If there is a phone number, you should actually call it to see if it connects to a real person/business. Of course, a phone number is no guarantee, but you can be pretty confident that a business that doesn't have one isn't going to give you what you pay for.

Pay attention to the advertising and promotional lingo. Are you seeing promises of "unlimited results" if you just purchase a subscription? Do you see claims of "instant results"? Those are popular and enticing catch phrases, but they just are not true. Current driver details are only available from state DMVs and they are not available for unlimited searches, nor are they available instantly. A site that makes any such claim is giving consumers the runaround and will often send links to other pay sites or will send old, outdated records purchased from database wholesalers.

If you have a license plate number and you want to verify or find the car's owner, chances are good that you are not interested in anything other than current records. Find out if the business has any real credentials. That means, are they licensed private investigators that have access to state DMV records? Driver information is protected by law and is not publicly available to just anyone with internet access and a license plate number. If you have a DPPA-compliant reason for requesting vehicle ownership information, then you want to look for a licensed and insured investigative firm. State licensed private investigators are subject to regulation and oversight and are therefore, much less likely to get away with scamming consumers. Select investigators have access to state DMV records and can often provide often provide a license plate search result within a day.

These warning signs are simple ways to protect yourself from giving out personal information and money to scammers.

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