Buying a used car privately: checks, paperwork and registration deadline

Record the car and seller, run the ownership, lien and history checks your province's own page lists, inspect and test drive, then get the paperwork right and register on time.

NAME

DATE

THE CAR AND THE SELLER

YEAR, MAKE, MODEL

VIN (ON THE CAR)

VIN ON THE SELLER'S REGISTRATION

SELLER'S NAME (AS ON REGISTRATION)

ASKING PRICE / AGREED PRICE

ODOMETER READING

BEFORE AND AFTER I PAY

- [ ] Seller's ID matches the registered owner
- [ ] VIN on the car matches the paperwork
- [ ] Lien (money owing) search done
- [ ] Vehicle history or claims report read
- [ ] Safety inspection or certificate (if my province needs one)
- [ ] Independent mechanic inspection
- [ ] Test drive: city and highway
- [ ] Bill of sale signed and dated by both of us
- [ ] Insurance arranged before driving away
- [ ] Registered in my name by the deadline below

MY PROVINCE

Step	My province's rule (from its page)	Done
Lien search: where and cost		
Inspection needed to register?		
Documents to register		
Register within (days)		

Rules differ by province. Read your own province's page in the sources; this sheet does not replace a mechanic's inspection.

SOURCES (CHECKED 2026-11-27)

Ontario says a private seller must give the buyer a Used Vehicle Information Package (UVIP), which shows any lien or money owing on the vehicle, and the buyer must register as the new owner within 6 days of the purchase. https://www.ontario.ca/page/buy-or-sell-used-vehicle-ontario (checked 2026-11-27)
Alberta says to get a vehicle information report from a registry agent or AMA, a personal property lien search based on the VIN, and a safety inspection before buying from a private seller. https://www.alberta.ca/buying-vehicle-private-seller (checked 2026-11-27)
ICBC says its vehicle claims history report covers claims from B.C., while a CARFAX Canada report covers claims from across North America. https://icbc.com/vehicle-registration/buy-vehicle/buy-a-used-vehicle/Vehicle-history-reports (checked 2026-11-27)
Manitoba Public Insurance says you need a valid safety Certificate of Inspection (COI) to register a newly acquired vehicle, and that a COI does not include a detailed engine or transmission inspection. https://www.mpi.mb.ca/certificate-of-inspection/ (checked 2026-11-27)
Saskatchewan's FCAA says it is the buyer's responsibility to check the Personal Property Registry for liens, through Information Services Corporation. https://fcaa.gov.sk.ca/consumers-investors-pension-plan-members/consumers/purchasing-goods-and-services/purchasing-and-repairing-a-vehicle/purchase-and-repair-tips (checked 2026-11-27)
Nova Scotia says the purchaser must apply to register the vehicle within 30 days of the date of purchase. https://novascotia.ca/sns/rmv/registration/vetrans.asp (checked 2026-11-27)

Buying a used car privately: checks, paperwork and registration deadline (continued)

New Brunswick lists the current registration or title, an acceptable bill of sale and proof of valid insurance for registering a used vehicle. https://www.gnb.ca/en/topic/driving-transportation/registration-inspection/motor-vehicle-registration.html (checked 2026-11-27)
Prince Edward Island says the buyer must transfer the registration within 7 days, presenting the signed vehicle permit, a bill of sale, a motor vehicle inspection form and a valid insurance card. https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/transportation-and-infrastructure/vehicle-registration-ownership-transfers (checked 2026-11-27)
Newfoundland and Labrador says all owners must agree to the sale and sign the bill of sale, and you need to transfer the vehicle within 10 days of buying it. https://www.gov.nl.ca/motorregistration/vehicle-ownership/buying-a-vehicle-private-sale/ (checked 2026-11-27)