

Vehicle Tax/Road Fund Licence/SORN

In order to use a vehicle on the road, you need to display a valid vehicle excise licence tax disc. These are purchased from the Post Office/Licensing Centres and now via the internet can be renewed online direct with the DVLA. Road fund licences last for either 6 or 12 months. The tax disc must be clearly displayed, normally to the left lower corner of the windscreen on cars or to the front of the vehicle on most motorcycles.

Some vehicles are exempt (see below) whereas others still need to display a tax disc, although this is provided free of charge.

To obtain a tax disc, you will need valid insurance, MOT certificate (if the vehicle is more than 3 years old) and proof of ownership; normally the log book or the tax disc reminder sent by the DVLA. Without these, the Post Office will no longer issue a tax disc.

When is a private vehicle exempt from displaying a tax disc?

Private vehicles are exempt in exceptional circumstances which are:

1. Travelling to an approved MOT test centre for a pre-booked MOT. Pre-booked is where the time and date of the test is established in advance. It does not mean setting off 3 days in advance to a test centre on the other side of the country. If you are using this exemption, the reasonableness of the journey will be challenged.
2. On the MOT test itself (although nowadays there should be no reason for anyone other than the tester to be in/on the vehicle) if it is actually necessary to take it on a public road.
3. After failing a MOT test, for the purpose of taking the vehicle to a pre-booked appointment at a garage to have the work carried out that caused the MOT failure.

It follows that in theory, if your vehicle fails the MOT test, you cannot actually take it home!

I own a classic car, do I still have to display a tax disc?

Owners of pre-1973 vehicles may believe that they do not require a tax disc. This is not correct. Although, they are not exempt from displaying a tax disc, the disc required (on production of the aforementioned documents) is free.

My car is not being driven, it is just parked on the road. Does it need to be taxed?

If your vehicle is on the road (whether being driven or not), it must display a tax disc that is valid. If it does not, you can be prosecuted and fined (but no penalty points can be endorsed



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on your licence). You can also be ordered to pay all "back tax" since the date of the last valid disc. The important issue is that a vehicle is being "used" on the road, even if it is only parked.

I have no intention to using the vehicle on the road, do I have any obligations regarding car tax?

As registered keeper of the vehicle, you do need to advise the DVLA that it is off the road. If you own a vehicle but have no intention of using it on the public road, you must supply a statutory off-road notice to the DVLA confirming whether the vehicle is being kept. The SORN is valid for 12 months and must be renewed again, even if you still have no intention of using the vehicle on a public road. Failing to supply the SORN is an offence which can result in a fixed penalty fine.

My tax disc has expired. Do I still get another 14 days to renew/obtain the road fund licence?

Although a tax disc can be purchased in advance of the current one expiring, there is no grace period following expiry in which you can continue to use the vehicle. This applies even if you intend to "get around" to buying the next tax disc, which will start from the date the previous one expired. If your tax disc expires on a Sunday, in theory, your obligation is to buy the new disc before it expires and not wait until the following Monday. However, it would be an extremely harsh court that imposed a punishment in those circumstances.

Is a tax disc transferable?

Tax discs are not transferable from one vehicle to another but can be transferred with ownership of the vehicle to another party. If you dispose of the vehicle before the tax disc expires, you can apply for a credit on any remaining complete months but there is an admin charge.

I am a motorcyclist and I am worried about my tax disc being stolen. I display a photocopy and keep the original in my wallet in case I am stopped. Is this OK?

No. Firstly, you are not allowed to take copies of a tax disc and to display it and secondly, the law states that you must have a valid tax disc displayed towards the front of your vehicle. Although theft of a tax disc is a common problem, the obligation is upon the vehicle user to secure the tax disc, rather than display a copy.

I've been involved in an accident and discovered by vehicle tax has expired, will this void my insurance?

Possibly. Although the situation is not ideal, lack of a road fund licence does not give an insurer adequate reasons to void a policy, unless the reason that the tax had not been renewed is because the vehicle was unroadworthy.



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What if my tax disc is stolen? Can I still drive my vehicle?

No. If you do not have a tax disc, you should not use the vehicle until a replacement disc has been obtained.

What is the penalty for not displaying a tax disc?

Pursuant to the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994, anybody who uses or keeps a vehicle on a public road, without there being a valid road licence, face the following penalties:

- A fine of up to £1,000.
- If it is greater than £1,000, a fine equal to five times the amount of duty payable to tax the vehicle.
- Ordered to pay all back duty owed since the vehicle was last licensed.

I ordered my tax disc online but it has not yet arrived, is it against the law to drive/park my vehicle on the public highway whilst I wait for the disc to arrive?

Yes, it is against the law to use the vehicle as you would be unable to display a current tax disc. The law is particularly written in this manner, to prevent the "tax in post" defence.

My vehicle is registered abroad, do I have to buy tax to drive it in the UK?

As long as your vehicle is properly registered and taxed for your home country, you are allowed to use it temporarily in the UK without obtaining a road fund licence or registering it. Temporary, means for a maximum of six months in any twelve month period. If you intend to use the vehicle for longer than this, it must be registered and taxed. Further, if you take up residency in the UK, you must tax and register the vehicle immediately.

I was using my vehicle without tax, the Police stopped me, towed away the vehicle and are now threatening to crush it. Is this allowed?

Yes. The Vehicle Excise and Regulation Act 1984 and the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 2002 authorise the Police, local authorities, licensing authorities, to remove and dispose of untaxed, uninsured or unroadworthy vehicles. The vehicles would not normally be crushed until 14 days after seizure.



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