IRVINE USED CARS

FREE PRINTABLE

# Moving to California with a car.

California expects new residents to register their cars **promptly**. Check the current deadline on **dmv.ca.gov** and book your DMV appointment early. Bring the car: it has to be inspected in person.

Appointment date _____ Office _____ Smog done (date) _____

## 1 Before you move

OLD STATE

- [ ] Find your out-of-state **title**. Financed or leased? Call the lender early: they hold the title and have to send paperwork to the DMV
- [ ] Keep your current out-of-state registration valid
- [ ] Gather the bill of sale and purchase date (helps with any use-tax question)
- [ ] Tell your insurer you're moving; get a quote for your new California address

## 2 Smog check

CALIFORNIA STATION

- [ ] Vehicles new to California need a **California smog check** when first registered here; other states' inspections don't count
- [ ] **Electric vehicles** are exempt; very old gas vehicles and some diesels have their own exemptions
- [ ] Smog at a licensed station; some cars are directed to a **STAR** station (locator at bar.ca.gov)
- [ ] Military service does not exempt a car from smog

## 4 Fees and tax

ASK, DON'T GUESS

- [ ] Registration fees have several parts: estimate them with the **DMV Fee Calculator**
- [ ] Bought the car shortly before moving? California **use tax** may apply, with possible credit for tax paid elsewhere. Check with the DMV and CDTFA

## 3 The DMV visit

BY APPOINTMENT

- [ ] Book an appointment at **dmv.ca.gov** and pick an office with the office locator
- [ ] Out-of-state title (or lender details) and current registration
- [ ] Your ID and proof of your California address
- [ ] Proof of insurance for your California address
- [ ] Smog certificate on file
- [ ] The car itself, for the **REG 31** Verification of Vehicle (VIN, odometer)
- [ ] Application for title or registration (current form on dmv.ca.gov)

## 5 After the DMV

SETTLING IN

- [ ] Put on your California plates and keep the registration card in the car
- [ ] California title arrives by mail, usually in **15–30 days**
- [ ] Set up FasTrak if you'll use toll roads (73, 133, 241, 261 are cashless)
- [ ] Note the renewal: Orange and Los Angeles counties require smog checks at the every-two-year renewal (newer gas cars pay an abatement fee instead; EVs are exempt)

### Also ask the DMV about

- Your California driver's license timing as a new resident
- Military members stationed here and nonresident students
- A temporary operating permit if something is missing

General information, checked October 2026; not legal or tax advice. Rules change: confirm on dmv.ca.gov and bar.ca.gov. Full guide: irvineautosales.com/blog/registering-out-of-state-car-in-california/



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