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MOT inspection manual: motorcycles

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0. Identification of the vehicle

Registration plate (number plate) and vehicle identification number rules and inspection for motorcycle MOT tests.

0.1. Registration plates

You must inspect the rear registration plate on all motorcycles except for:

- unregistered motorcycles
- foreign registered motorcycles
- diplomatic motorcycles
- military motorcycles

You do not need to inspect front number plates.

You do not need to inspect the following items:

- the supplier's name
- postcode
- BS number
- logos or emblems if they are outside the minimum margin around the registration number

Registration plates must not:

- be obscured, excessively damaged, deteriorated or delaminated
- have background overprinting
- have any feature or fixing that changes the appearance or legibility of any of the characters

- have a honeycomb or similar effect background on motorcycles first registered on or after 1 September 2001 - back-lit registration plates may have a honeycomb type construction which is not to be confused with a honeycomb effect background

Particular attention should be given to the position of any fixing screws or bolts as well as any delamination of the number plate as this can prevent identification of the motorcycle by automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras which 'see' any non-reflective material as being black.

Registration plates may:

- have an optional non-reflective border displayed within the margin - this must be no wider than 6mm and not within 5mm of the characters
- display white, grey or silver characters on a black background - only on motorcycles manufactured before 1 January 1977
- use characters containing grey, possibly to achieve a 3D effect

Registration plate characters must be:

- correct size, stroke width and spacing
- laid out in the correct format for the age of motorcycle
- formed using the prescribed font or be similar to the prescribed font
- not in italic, sloping or formed using broken or multiple strokes

You do not need to physically measure the characters or their spacing. They should only be rejected if they are obviously incorrect.

I 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
A B C D E F G H J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Rear registration plates fitted to motorcycles manufactured on or after 1 January 1977 must:

- have black characters on a yellow background
- be fitted vertically, or as close to vertical as is reasonably practicable
- be mounted at the rear of the motorcycle

Rear registration plates on motorcycles must be in a two line format. Motorcycles first used before 1 September 2001 can have a three line format.

Any optional non-reflective border must be at least 5mm from the characters



13mm space between vertical groups



Registration plates must meet the dimensional requirements shown in the examples. However, the space between a ‘1’ or an ‘l’ and another character is permitted to be proportionately greater.

Motorcycles with non-date related plates, such as those issued before 1963 and Northern Ireland plates must still meet the separation requirement between groups of characters where relevant.



Motorcycles registered before 1 September 2001 can have larger plates fitted with characters 89mm high and other relevant dimensions that are subsequently larger.

Imported motorcycles that do not have the space for a standard sized registration plate can have a smaller registration plate.

Defect	Category
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Defect	Category
(a) Number plate missing or so insecure that it is likely to fall off	Major
(b) Number plate inscription missing or illegible	Major
(c) Number plate showing an incorrect registration	Major
(d) Number plate does not conform to the specified requirements	Major

0.2. Vehicle identification number (VIN)

Check the motorcycle is displaying a legible vehicle identification number (VIN).

Motorcycles may have the VIN displayed in more than one location, but only one VIN must be complete and legible. All motorcycles first used on or after 1 August 1999 must have a VIN or frame number.

Check that there is not more than one VIN displayed, other than for multi-stage build motorcycles. Multi-stage build motorcycles can have 2 VINs, both of which may have the same last 8 digits.

When registering a multi-stage build motorcycle for test, enter the last 6 digits of either VIN, along with the registration number. If the MOT testing service finds a match against either full VIN this should be accepted.

If no match is found, create a new record using the converter's VIN.

A converter's serial number is not a VIN.

Defect	Category
(a) VIN missing or cannot be found	Major
(b) VIN incomplete, illegible or obviously falsified	Major
(c) More than one different VIN displayed	Major