

Danny's License Plates

Some highlights from my license plate collection

Washington State License Plate Guide

Below is an at-a-glance summary of Washington passenger vehicle license plates by year, compiled from plates from my collection. This is meant as a useful tool for dating vintage photos. Please see my [Washington State License Plate History \(https://dannyslicenseplates.com/washingtonhistory/\)](https://dannyslicenseplates.com/washingtonhistory/) page for background.

Many vintage photos show new vehicles with temporary county-issued paper or cardboard licenses. [For more information, please see this page. \(https://dannyslicenseplates.com/temporary-licenses/\)](https://dannyslicenseplates.com/temporary-licenses/)

1905-1915

During this period, registration numbers were assigned by the state, but owners were responsible for providing their own plates ([more information here \(https://dannyslicenseplates.com/prestate-era/\)](https://dannyslicenseplates.com/prestate-era/)). As a result, there is a wide variety of types and designs, and sometimes the number was simply painted on the vehicle. “WN” and the registration number were the only information displayed.







1916-1962

The state began producing and issuing license plates for the 1916 licensing year. Until 1921, licenses were valid for the state's fiscal year, not calendar year, with the date on the plate denoting the year of expiration (typically end of February). Thus, a plate dated 1917 was mostly on the road in 1916. From 1922 forward, license years aligned with calendar years.

			
1916 valid June 10, 1915 to February 28, 1916	1917 valid March 1, 1916 to February 28, 1917	1918 valid March 1, 1917 to February 28, 1918	1919 valid March 1, 1918 to March 31, 1919
			
1920 valid March 1, 1919 to February 28, 1920. Three versions of plates were valid: 1) 1919 plate renewed with white porcelain tab; 2) full porcelain dated 1920 plate, with a color scheme to mimic the look of a renewed 1919 plate; 3) full metal dated 1920 plate, with the same color scheme			1921 (Type 1) valid March 1, 1920 to February 28, 1921
			
1921 (Type 2) valid March 1, 1921 to December 31, 1921	1922 valid full calendar year, as are all subsequent years	1923	1924
			

1925	1926	1927	1928
1929	1930	1931	1932
1933	1934	1935	1936
1937	1938	1939	1940
1941	1942	1944	1945
	valid through 1944 (renewed via windshield sticker)	issued only to new registrants	valid through 1946 (renewed via windshield sticker)

<p>1947 valid through 1948 (renewed by windshield sticker)</p>	<p>1949</p>	<p>1950 valid through 1953 (renewed by metal tab in 1951 and 1953, and windshield sticker in 1952)</p>	<p>1951 valid through 1953 (renewed by windshield sticker in 1952 and metal tab in 1953)</p>
			
<p>1954 valid from 1954 through 1957 (renewed by metal tab in '55, '56, and '57). Three types: 1) steel – made in Walla Walla prison prior to Sept 1953 fire; 2) aluminum – made by Screw Machine Company in Portland, OR after the fire; 3) aluminum 6" x 12", made 1956 and later (but dated 1954) in new federally-standardized dimensions of 6" x 12"</p>			<p>1958 valid through 1962 (renewed by adhesive stickers)</p>

1963-1997

All of the following bases were valid from the indicated dates until 2000:

			
<p>1963</p>	<p>1965</p>	<p>1968</p>	<p>1977</p>
			
<p>1980</p>	<p>1982</p>	<p>1985</p>	<p>1987</p>



1998-present



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