



# Texas Department of Motor Vehicles

HELPING TEXANS GO. HELPING TEXAS GROW.

## Personalized License Plate Guidelines and Restrictions

Texans are proud of our distinctive character. Since 1965, one of the ways we reveal our character is with our personalized specialty license plates. The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) is happy to keep this tradition going, and we hope you have fun with your plates. To help, we offer the following guidelines.

### 1. How to create your personalized plate

Use any combination of alphanumeric characters, spaces, and symbols including: hyphens, periods, hearts, stars, or silhouettes of the State of Texas. Be aware that the number of characters allowed on a license plate varies depending on the plate design. If you include the International Symbol of Access, you will reduce the number of characters you can display on your plate by two. Some plates, such as military and university plates, display a logo. The logo position is stationary and cannot be moved. Your personalized license plates must be unique, and no two Texans may have the same alphanumeric characters on their plates. If your online submission is returned with an “unavailable” response, it means TxDMV made the pattern unavailable or it is already in use. Simply try another combination to create your personalized plate.

### 2. Why TxDMV may decline your personalized plate

The process of applying for a personalized plate will be easier if you know the rules beforehand. TxDMV reviews your personalized plate pattern before your plates are manufactured and considers how the personalization may be viewed. When reviewing a personalized alphanumeric pattern, the TxDMV does not always consider the applicant’s subjective intent or declared meaning.

There are several reasons why TxDMV may decline a requested personalized alphanumeric pattern.

1. The alphanumeric pattern conflicts with the department’s current or proposed regular license plate numbering system.
2. The director or the director’s designee finds that the personalized alphanumeric pattern may be considered objectionable. An objectionable alphanumeric pattern may include words, phrases, or slang in any language; phonetic, numeric, or reverse spelling; acronyms; patterns viewed in mirror image; or code that only a small segment of the community may be able to readily decipher. An objectionable pattern may be viewed as:
  - (A) indecent (defined as including a direct reference or connotation to a sexual act, sexual body parts, excreta, or sexual bodily fluids or functions. Additionally, the alphanumeric pattern “69” is prohibited unless used with the full year (1969) or in combination with a reference to a vehicle);
  - (B) vulgar, directly or indirectly (defined as profane, swear, or curse words);
  - (C) derogatory, directly or indirectly (defined as an expression that is demeaning to, belittles, or disparages any person, group, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, or sexual orientation. “Derogatory” may also include a reference to an organization that advocates the expressions described in this subparagraph);
  - (D) a direct or indirect negative instruction or command directed to another individual related to the operation of a motor vehicle;

- (E) a direct or indirect reference to gangs, illegal activities, implied threats of harm, or expressions that describe, advertise, advocate, promote, encourage, glorify, or condone violence, crime, or unlawful conduct;
- (F) a direct or indirect reference to controlled substances or the physiological state produced by such substances, intoxicated states, or a direct or indirect reference that may express, describe, advertise, advocate, promote, encourage, or glorify such substances or states;
- (G) a direct representation of law enforcement or other governmental entities, including any reference to a public office or position exclusive to government; or
- (H) a pattern that could be misread by law enforcement.

An alphanumeric personalized pattern that refers to a military branch, military rank, military unit, military equipment, or status, or institutions of higher education, including military academies, whether funded privately, by the state, or by the federal government is allowed.

### **3. Laws and rules**

The TxDMV will approve and decline applications for personalized license plates in accordance with the state laws below.

- A. License plates are issued according to Transportation Code Sections
  - §504.005, Design and Alphanumeric characters;
  - §504.0051, Personalized License Plates;
  - §504.008, Specialty License Plates;
  - §504.101, Personalized License Plates; and
  - §504.102, Personalization of Specialty License Plates.
- B. Personalized license plate alphanumeric characters, symbols and rules are clarified in Texas Administrative Code
  - TITLE 43 TRANSPORTATION
  - PART 10 TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES
  - CHAPTER 217 VEHICLE TITLES AND REGISTRATION
  - SUBCHAPTER B MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION
  - RULE §217.27, Vehicle Registration Insignia; and
  - RULE §217.45, Specialty License Plates, Symbols, Tabs, and Other Devices