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Selling a Car? Get Vehicle History Reports From Vetted Websites. Here's How:

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The Federal Trade Commission has been hearing about a new scam targeting people who are selling their cars online. They're getting calls or texts from people who claim to be interested in buying the car — but first want to see a car history report.

— *This article is from [a post](#) on the Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Information blog. Colleen Tressler is a consumer information specialist at the FTC.*

They ask the seller to get the report from a specific website, where the seller needs to enter some information

and pay about \$20 by credit card for the report. The seller then sends it to the supposed buyer but never hears back. Weird, huh?

What to Avoid: .vin

Well, it gets weirder. When the car sellers go to one of these websites, they're automatically redirected to sites ending in '.vin' – which seems like it might be related to your car's vehicle identification number or VIN, right? Scammers hope you'll think that, but no.

In this case, .vin is a relatively new website "domain" – like .com or .org – that groups can apply to use. This domain was intended to be used for sites that relate to wine, since "vin" is the French word for wine, but others are not prevented from using it.

So, if you are selling a car online and someone asks you to get a car history report from a specific site, ask why and think twice. You may have no way of knowing who operates the site, especially if it's one you've never heard of.

It might be a ruse to get your personal information, including your credit card account number. It also could be a way for companies called "lead generators" to get information, which they sell to third parties for advertising and marketing purposes.

A Better Way

Your best bet: play it safe. Go to ftc.gov/usedcars for information on vehicle history reports, recall notices, and how to learn whether a car has been declared salvage. For example, the [National Motor Vehicle Title Information System](https://www.nmvtis.com) (NMVTIS) operates vehiclehistory.gov, which lists NMVTIS-approved providers of vehicle history reports.

Not all vehicle history reports are available through the NMVTIS website. Reports from other providers sometimes have additional information, like accident and repair history.

- **Whether you're familiar with a company or not, it's always helpful to see what other people are saying online. Simply enter the name of the company, and words like "complaint," "review," "rating," or "scam."**

To get more information like this, [sign up for the FTC's Consumer Information Updates](#).