

11. Cars, Car Loans, And Car Leases

If you are being deported, you can sell your car, give it up, or take it with you. It depends on whether you own your car, lease your car or if you own your car and have a car loan. This section provides suggestions to address the following issues:

[What Can You Do With Your Car If You're Being Deported?](#) > [What Can You Do If You Own Your Car Outright?](#) > [What Can You Do If You Have a Car Loan?](#) > [What Can You Do If You Lease Your Car?](#) > [Selling Your Car](#) > [Surrendering Your Car to a Lender](#) > [Insurance and Registration](#) > [Exporting Your Car](#) > [Checklist: Cars, Car Loans, and Car Leases](#)

Each Chapter is intended to provide generalized information on a particular topic. In many cases, laws may differ from state to state. Therefore, this information is not intended to replace state-specific legal assistance. Nothing in this manual is intended to create an attorney-client or fiduciary relationship.

What Can You Do With Your Car If You're Being Deported?

It depends on whether you own or lease your car. If you own your car, it also depends on whether or not you have a car loan.

What Can You Do If You Own Your Car?

If you own your car, you can sell it or export it. Exporting a car can be complicated, so it may be simpler to sell your car in the U.S. and buy a new car in your destination country. Please see below for more information about selling or exporting your car.

What Can You Do If You Have a Car Loan?

If you have a car loan, you should start by reviewing your loan documents. Depending on what they say, you may be able to:

- Pay off the loan and export your car;
- Sell your car and pay off the loan with proceeds;
- Sell your car to someone who is willing to assume the loan (lender will have to approve); or
- Surrender your car to the lender.

Please see below for more information on selling or exporting your car.

What Can You Do If You Lease Your Car?

If you lease your car, you should start by reviewing your lease. Depending on what it says, you may be able to:

- Terminate and pay off the lease (and surrender the vehicle to the lease finance company);
- Transfer or sell the lease to someone else (e.g., using online or other services);
- Sell your car and pay off the lease (if your car is worth more than the total buyout for the car and all remaining lease payments, you can sell your car and pay off the lease at the same time.); or
- Buy your car and pay off the lease.

See below for more information on the above options.

Terminate and Pay off the Lease (and surrender the vehicle to the lease finance company)

- Call the lease finance company listed on your monthly statement and ask for the total amount to pay off and terminate the lease. You should also ask for the total amount if you want to sell the car and terminate the lease (see “Selling Your Car” section below).
- If you decide to pay the termination amount (without selling the car), then ask for instructions on where to bring the car.
- If you don’t have enough money to pay the termination amount (and one of the other options below is not available), you will need to work out a payment plan with the lease finance company. Make sure that you have this in writing.
- You may be able to negotiate any penalties if you explain your situation to the leasing company.

Transferring / Selling a Lease

- You may not transfer a lease without permission from the lease finance company. If you find someone who wants to take over your lease, you must get approval from and work directly with your lease finance company.
- There are online sites where people can post ads. These sites aren't regulated so you should be careful when using.

Sell the Car and Pay off the Lease

- See the "Selling Your Car" section below.

Buy the Car and Pay off the Lease

- If you want to purchase and keep your car, then call the finance company listed on your monthly statement and ask for the total amount to buy the car and terminate the lease. Coordinate payment and transfer of title with the finance company.
- If you do this, you will need to complete the transfer of title and registration into your name and also work through any export requirements as noted in this chapter.

If another person is obligated on the lease, you should tell that person about your situation. They will need to be part of any decision you make.

See online websites or other resources for more information on ending your lease early. While we do not endorse particular businesses, we believe it is important to point immigrants who may not have made similar transactions to examples of services. Some examples are:

- <http://www.jdpower.com/cars/articles/tips-advice/how-end-your-lease-early>
- <https://www.moneyunder30.com/get-out-of-a-car-lease-early>

Selling Your Car

Before selling your car, find out how much your car is worth using the Kelley Blue Book (<http://www.kbb.com>) or another resource. If your car is leased, then you should call the finance company listed on your monthly statement and ask for the total amount to buy the car and terminate the lease. Decide the lowest price that you would accept for your car.

If you still owe money on the car, compare the value of your car to the amount left on your loan. If your car is worth more than the loan and you have enough money to pay off the loan, you can pay off the loan, then sell your car. If you do not have enough money to pay off the car loan before finding a buyer, you can use the buyer's payment to pay off the loan and keep the difference as profit. You will have to get permission from your lender(s) to make the sale in order to transfer clear title to the buyer. If the car is worth less than the loan, consider surrendering the car to the lender instead of selling it. In this case, you will still owe the lender any amount remaining on the loan unless you work out a deal with the lender. Make sure to receive a document evidencing all transactions and any new deal made with a lender.

You can sell your car to another person using online or paper classified advertisements, word-of-mouth, or other available services. You can also sell your car to the original dealer or another certified dealer who sells or leases the type of car you currently have. You may also sell your vehicle to a used-car dealership. In some cases, choosing to work with an experienced dealer can be easier.

If you lease your car, it may be easiest to sell your car to the original dealer or another certified dealer who leases the same brand of car. Specifically, you would:

- Call the lease finance company listed on your monthly statement and ask for the total amount to buy the car and terminate the lease (the “Buyout/Termination Amount”).
- Go in person with your car to the original dealership where you leased the car or any other certified dealership which leases the same brand of car. Tell them you want to get out of your lease and ask if they would want to purchase the car for equal to or more than the Buyout/Termination Amount.
- If yes, then they can work directly with the lease finance company to purchase the car and pay off the lease.

- This can usually be done within 2-3 business days.
- If the purchase price is more than the Buyout/Termination Amount, the purchaser will give you the difference.

Before allowing a potential buyer to test drive the car, make sure that your insurance policy covers test drives.

Put the sale terms in writing and get the payment from the buyer in cash or a certified check to limit the chances of fraud before giving the keys or transferring the title to the buyer.

File the necessary forms for transferring title and for sales tax purposes.

If you don't have time to sell your car before you leave, you could give a limited Power of Attorney (POA) to a trusted friend and ask the friend to sell the car for you. You will have to give your friend the signed vehicle title to give to a buyer.

See these websites for more information on selling your car:

- <https://www.kbb.com/car-advice/how-to-sell-a-car-10-steps-for-success>
- <https://www.carfax.com/guides/selling/private-party-sale>
- <https://www.edmunds.com/sell-car/10-steps-to-selling-your-car.html>

Surrendering Your Car to a Lender

If you have a car loan, you can surrender your car to your lender (you will be liable for any deficiency unless you work out a deal with the lender). Check your loan documents for details. You may be able to negotiate any fees for defaulting on your car loan if you explain your situation to the lender.

Insurance and Registration

If you sell or surrender your car, you will need to cancel your car insurance and registration and take your license plates to the Department of Motor Vehicles. You may have to take the registration sticker and inspection sticker off the car too.

Exporting Your Car

To export your car, you have to meet exportation requirements in the United States and importation requirements in your destination country.

U.S. Exportation Requirements

If you want to export your car, you'll have to hire a U.S. agent (a Freight Forwarder, Broker, etc.) to file export information with U.S. Customs on your behalf. This information includes the original Certificate of Title for your car or a Certified Copy of the Certificate of Title and two complete copies of the original Certificate of Title or the Certified Copy. Your agent will have to file this information at least three days before you plan to export your car.

If the title to your car shows that there is a lien on your car, you will have to show that the lien has been removed or provide a signed and dated writing from the lienholder (on their letterhead) which states:

- (i) that the car may be exported,
- (ii) the contact information of the lienholder, and
- (iii) the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). A lien is a legal document that permits the lender to repossess your car if you fail to make payments.

See online websites or other resources for more information on exporting your car. While we do not endorse particular businesses or services, we believe it is important to point immigrants who may not have made similar transactions to sources of information. Some examples are:

- [Exporting a Vehicle | CBP](#)

Mexican Importation Requirements

Importing a car to Mexico is relatively complicated. The requirements depend on your car's age and Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). Consider hiring a Mexican Customs Broker Agency to import your car for you.

See online websites or other resources for more information on importing your car to Mexico. While we do not endorse particular businesses or services, we believe it is important to point people who may not have made similar transactions to sources of information. Some examples are:

- [How to Bring a Foreign-Plated Car Into Mexico](#)

Checklist: Cars, Car Loans, and Car Leases

- Find out if you own your car, lease your car or if you own your car but have a car loan.
- If you own your car, you may sell it or export it. Exportation can be complicated, so it may be easier for you to sell your car and buy a new car in your destination country.
- If you lease your car, you can terminate and pay off your lease, surrender your car to the leasing company, sell the lease to someone else or sell your car and pay off the lease.
- If you own your car but have a car loan, you may pay off the loan and export your car to your destination country, surrender your car to the lender, sell your car and pay off the loan with the proceeds, or sell your car to someone who is willing to assume the loan (but the lender will have to approve).
- If you sell or surrender your car, cancel your car insurance and registration and take your license plates to the Department of Motor Vehicles.
- Whether you own or lease your car consider checking with your original car dealer or another certified car dealer to see what they can do.