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Demystifying VIN references

Whether for explaining faults to the workshop, finding compatible components or ordering parts, the VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) is by far the most accurate and timesaving method of communicating specific information about a vehicle. Part of this is due to variances between manufacturing and vehicle delivery dates. It is not uncommon to find a two-year difference either way, so merely stating the year of the model can lead to complications in the supply of parts. This is one reason why we always check by phone when on-line parts orders are received, to avoid the cost and inconvenience potentially caused by shipping the wrong component.

The owner's manual should have the VIN listed on the inside of the book and the vehicle registration papers should also state the VIN accurately. However, in the real world, especially if the vehicle has changed hands a couple of times, anything is possible so for added security, it is smart to look at the compliance plate. The location of this plate bearing the VIN may vary from one Land Rover model to another. Ancient Series Land Rovers had the plate on (of all places) the brake pedal box in the engine compartment. On many Range Rovers and Discovery vehicles, it is located on the front panel under the bonnet, but in some Range Rovers it was on the firewall and the P38, vehicles had the plate located on the sill below the left hand front door. There is of course, no truth in the rumour that Land Rover did this deliberately to maintain a state of confusion in the traditions of Lucas et al.

The 17 digit number is ISO 3779 compliant so it actually does make sense, if one knows how to read it: The first three characters denote the manufacturer. SAL denotes the region, country and manufacturer. In Australia therefore, virtually every Land Rovers, regardless of model or year will have a VIN beginning with SAL..

The next character string (4 to 9 inclusive) identifies the vehicle type, model and body style, The last 7 digits are specific to the individual vehicle. The 10th digit identifies the year of manufacture. The 11th number identifies the manufacturing plant (Usually Solihull UK). The final 6 numbers are unique serial numbers of this specific vehicle.

The data in the following table has been sourced/reformatted from the UK based Land Rover one-ten user group – website <http://landroveronetten.com>:

Region	S = Europe	
Country	A = UK	
Manufacturer	L = Land Rover	
Model type	LB	Series III
	LD	Ninety, One Ten, 127, Defender
	LH	Range Rover
	LJ	Discovery
	LM	Range Rover L322
	LN	Freelander
	LP	Range Rover (38A)
	LT	Discovery Series II

Wheelbase		
	A	Series III 88" Defender 90" extra heavy duty Range Rover Classic 100" Range Rover (38A) 108" Freelander
	B	Series III 88" Lightweight Defender 110" extra heavy duty Range Rover Classic LSE 108" Freelander Commercial
	C	Series III 109" Defender 130" extra heavy duty
	D	Series III 109"
	G	100" (Discovery)
	H	110" (L/R)
	K	130" (L/R)
	M	Special Build
	R	110" (24 volt)
	S	90" (24 volt)
	V	90" (L/R)
Body Style		
	A	Basic Soft Top Pickup Hardtop Van Commercial Freelander 3 Door Commercial Discovery 3 or 5 Door
	B	Series III 88" Station Wagon Defender 3door Station Wagon Range Rover Classic 2 door Discovery 3 door Freelander 5 Door
	F	Defender 4 door Crew cab non Hi-capacity
	H	High Capacity Pick Up with/without crew cab
	M	Defender 5door Station Wagon Range Rover Classic 5 door Range Rover (38A) 5 door Discovery 5 door
	R	Range Rover Moneverdi
Engine type		
	A	1.8L, inline 4 cylinder, 'K' Series, High Compression Unleaded
	B	2.5L, inline 4 cylinder, turbo-diesel 19J 2.0L, inline 4 cylinder, 'L' Series, turbo-diesel
	C	2.5L, inline 4 cylinder, diesel 12J 1.8L, inline 4 cylinder, 'K' Series, Low Compression Unleaded
	D	2.5L, inline 4 cylinder, petrol 17H 1.8L, inline 4 cylinder, 'K' Series, Low Compression Leaded
	E	3.5L, V8 carb, petrol, High Compression 2.4L, inline 4 cylinder, VM Diesel 2.0L, inline 4 cylinder, BMW M47 (Td4), diesel
	F	2.5L, inline 4 cylinder, turbo-diesel (200Tdi/300Tdi) non EGR/cat, 11L or 16L 1.8L, inline 4 cylinder, 'K' Series, High Compression Leaded

	G	2.25L, inline 4 cylinder, diesel 2.5L, V6, 'KV6' Series, Unleaded
	H	2.25L, inline 4 cylinder, petrol 2.5L, V6, 'KV6' Series, Leaded
	J	4.6L, V8 Efi, petro 2.5L, V6, 'KV6' Series, Ethanol
	L	3.5L, V8 Efi, petrol
	M	3.9 & 4.0L, V8 Efi, petrol
	N	2.5L, inline 4 cylinder, VM Diesel
	P	2.6L, inline 6 cylinder, IOE petrol
	V	3.5L, V8 carb, petrol, Low Compression
	W	2.5L, inline 6 cylinder, BMW Diesel
	Y	2.0L, inline 4 cylinder Mpi, petrol
	1	4.0L, V8Efi, Low Compression with Cat
	2	4.0L, V8Efi, High Compression with Cat
	3	4.0L, V8Efi, Low Compression without Cat
	6	2.5L, inline 4 cylinder, turbo-diesel (200Tdi/300Tdi) EGR/cat
	8	2.5L, inline 5 cylinder, turbo-diesel (Td5) EGR
	9	2.5L, inline 5 cylinder, turbo-diesel (Td5) EGR without Cat (Disco II) 2.8L, inline 6 cylinder, M52 BMW petrol
Gearbox type		
	1	Series III 4 speed / Right Hand Drive LT95 4 speed / Right Hand Drive JATCO 5 speed Auto / Right Hand Drive
	2	Series III 4 speed / Left Hand Drive LT95 4 speed / Left Hand Drive JATCO 5 speed Auto / Left Hand Drive
	3	Chrysler 747 3 speed Auto / Right Hand Drive ZF 4 speed Auto / Right Hand Drive
	4	Chrysler 747 3 speed Auto / Left Hand Drive ZF 4 speed Auto / Left Hand Drive
	5	RHD 4 speed gearbox + overdrive
	6	LHD 4 speed gearbox + overdrive
	7	LT77 5 Speed Manual / Right Hand Drive LT77S 5 Speed Manual / Right Hand Drive LT85 5 Speed Manual / Right Hand Drive R380 5 Speed Manual / Right Hand Drive PG1 5 speed5 Speed Manual / Right Hand Drive
	8	LT77 5 Speed Manual / Left Hand Drive LT77S 5 Speed Manual / Left Hand Drive LT85 5 Speed Manual / Left Hand Drive R380 5 Speed Manual / Left Hand Drive PG1 5 speed Manual / Left Hand Drive
Year of Build		
	B	Ser. III CSW or R/R Phase II, or 90/110 face lift to 1987 M/Y
	C	R/R 1986 M/Y
	D	R/R 1987 M/Y
	E	1988
	F	1989
	G	1990
	H	1991
	J	1992
	K	1993
	L	1994
	M	1995
	T	1996
	V	1997
	W	1998
	X	1999

	Y	2000
	1	2001
	2	2002
	3	2003
	4	2004
	5	2005
	6	2006
	7	2007
	8	2008
	9	2009
Build Type		
	A	Solihull, UK
	F	Worldwide - CKD knock down kit
	V	South Africa

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