

VEHICLE MODEL YEAR ENCODING (VIN)

One consistent element of the VIN is the 10th digit, which is required worldwide to encode the model year of the vehicle. Besides the three letters that are not allowed in the VIN itself (I, O and Q), the letters U and Z and the digit 0 are not used for the model year code. Note that the year code is the model year for the vehicle.

The year 1980 was encoded by some manufacturers, especially General Motors and Chrysler, as "A" (since the 17-digit VIN wasn't mandatory until 1981, and the "A" or zero was in the manufacturer's pre-1981 placement in the VIN), yet Ford and AMC still used a zero for 1980. Subsequent years increment through the allowed letters, so that "Y" represents the year 2000. 2001 to 2009 are encoded as the digits 1 to 9, and subsequent years are encoded as "A", "B", "C", etc.

Code	Year	Code	Year	Code	Year	Code	Year	Code	Year
A =	1980	L =	1990	Y =	2000	A =	2010	L =	2020
B =	1981	M =	1991	1 =	2001	B =	2011	M =	2021
C =	1982	N =	1992	2 =	2002	C =	2012	N =	2022
D =	1983	P =	1993	3 =	2003	D =	2013	P =	2023
E =	1984	R =	1994	4 =	2004	E =	2014	R =	2024
F =	1985	S =	1995	5 =	2005	F =	2015	S =	2025
G =	1986	T =	1996	6 =	2006	G =	2016	T =	2026
H =	1987	V =	1997	7 =	2007	H =	2017	V =	2027
J =	1988	W =	1998	8 =	2008	J =	2018	W =	2028
K =	1989	X =	1999	9 =	2009	K =	2019	X =	2029

The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration proposed rule NHTSA-2008-0022 in April, 2008, with several changes to the VIN requirements to all motor vehicles manufactured on or after April 30, 2009. There are three notable proposed changes in the new VIN structure that affect VIN deciphering systems:

1. The make may only be identified after looking at positions 1–3 and another position, as determined by the manufacturer in the second section or 4–8 segment of the VIN.
2. In order to identify exact year in passenger cars and multipurpose passenger vehicles with a GVWR of 10,000 or less, one must read position 7 as well as position 10. For passenger cars, and for multipurpose passenger vehicles and trucks with a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,000 lb (4,500 kg) or less, if position 7 is numeric, the model year in position 10 of the VIN refers to a year in the range 1980–2009. If position 7 is alphabetic, the model year in position 10 of VIN refers to a year in the range 2010–2039.
3. The model year for vehicles with a GVWR greater than 10,000 lb (4,500 kg), as well as buses, motorcycles, trailers and low speed vehicles may no longer be identified within a 30-year range. VIN characters 1–8 and 10 that were assigned from 1980–2009 can be repeated beginning with the 2010 model year.