

How To Avoid JDM Import Scams

(New Introductory Paragraph. Replaces the one in the older article)

Buying a JDM car has never been easy, and one of the reasons why it is so is the presence of scammers. These can be fraudulent importers/exporters, dealerships, or individuals taking advantage of the increasing demand for JDM cars, turning dream purchases into nightmares for buyers. In this article, we dive into the world of JDM car import scams exploring different tactics employed by scammers, how to avoid JDM car scams, and how to identify fake JDM car listings, fraudulent importers/exporters, and dealerships. But first, what are the different types of JDM car import scams?

JDM Cars Being Sold Without Titles

In JDM car trade groups, you might have noticed some sellers listing cars for sale without titles. Such listings are also common on online listing platforms, such as Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, and eBay, that don't require sellers to present the car's title before listing it for sale.

Some sellers who list JDM cars for sale will openly state the car doesn't have a title in the listing details. On the other hand, others will only notify you when you message them to arrange a viewing or during the pre-purchase inspection, which is a huge red flag. Failure to present the title during the pre-purchase inspection is also a red flag.

The only time it's understandable to buy a JDM car without a title is if the seller [misplaced the original title](#). A duplicate is issued after the owner reports the title missing, but this has to be verified at the local DMV before agreeing to a final price and transferring funds. But again, are you willing to spend countless hours at the DMV doing a title transfer or at the court to prove ownership if the owner ghosts you?

If the seller doesn't have a title at hand, it could mean that the car is stolen, has a floating title, or the title got suspended, which is not unusual for JDM cars. JDM cars listed for sale with floating titles are more common, especially with individual importers who don't operate on business licenses and don't want to because of taxes and other requirements. It's not advisable to buy from such, but if you are in a state with lenient traffic laws, you might get a deal on a JDM car without a title since most are listed below market value.

[JDM car titles mostly get suspended](#) due to fraud during initial titling, incorrect titling details, or if the car has been wrecked before but wasn't reported. Incorrect or fraudulent import papers, missed taxes, and reckless driving could also lead to a JDM car's title being suspended or, even worse, revoked. Buying any JDM car with a revoked or suspended title is not advisable unless the owner sorts out everything and presents a title during the purchase. You might get a good offer on the car but prioritize your safety, legal compliance, and financial and mental well-being.

JDM Cars Being Sold With Counterfeit Titles

Sometimes, sellers acquire counterfeit titles for JDM cars if they can't get a title. They do this to deceive you as a buyer and make you believe that the car has a legitimate ownership history, was imported correctly, and has no record of theft or wreckage. It's easy to fall for such, especially if the car meets all your expectations and it's the perfect spec you're looking for. That's why verifying the title is always recommended before price negotiations. So, how do you do that?

It would be best to start by visually inspecting the title and looking for crucial indicators before checking the car's VIN on the issuing authority's website or visiting the DMV with the title. If you're familiar with car titles, any irregularities in the format and design of the presented title should tell you something's not right, especially on a local title. Also, look out for fishy or missing watermarks and misspelled or missing information.

Do you want to know if a JDM car title is counterfeited the easy way? As you chat with the seller about the car, note the crucial details such as mileage, repaints, and crash damages and cross-check on the title. Some sellers/owners don't know what the title says, and there's a chance you might catch them slipping. If they don't, you might find something inconsistent with the information on the title while inspecting the car. Any signs of repairs and mismatching paint should definitely raise questions.

False "JDM cars for sale" Listings

Fake listings in JDM car groups and online marketplaces are increasingly becoming common as more JDM cars meet the 25 and 15-year import rules in the United States and Canada. You might think it's easy to detect such listings since all you have to do is ask to view the car, and the seller will give funny excuses before dipping. However, this is not the case. Most fake listings are of JDM cars in Japan, especially those that cannot be legally imported yet. So, what happens when a JDM car is falsely listed for sale, and how do you detect a fake listing?

Individual sellers or an individual posing as an exporter in Japan or importer in US or Canada will create a fake listing offering a JDM car for sale. In most cases, the price indicated is below average to woo the buyer to make contact. After which, the seller will most likely demand a deposit to acquire the car from auction, inspect it, and ship it to the US, where the balance will be paid upon handing over. New buyers will fall for this, ending up blocked after continuously sending messages and making calls demanding to be briefed on the progress. The seller then creates a new account and baits another unsuspecting buyer.

For cars that can't be legally imported yet, the seller offers storage, inspection, and free maintenance until the car is legally imported. It's almost like getting lunch at a food truck and being offered cutlery which is highly unlikely, so some buyers fall for it. They make a deposit and maybe the total amount if they are convinced. In return, they get pre-recorded videos and photos and end up being ghosted when it's finally time to ship the car. Funny enough, the seller might be so good at his scam game that he will "ship" the car and send false documents before ghosting.

Being scammed by local JDM car sellers happens but in a different way. A seller will list a car for sale but will not provide the full details. Some will only provide extra information when you message them privately; others will wait until it's time to view the car.

In some cases, the information withheld is about extra charges you'll have to pay before fully owning the car, mostly legal fees. Or maybe they bought the car on loan and hadn't finished paying it out yet. Bait and switch listings are also common, where you find that the car doesn't remotely look like the car on the listing. If a JDM car dealer does this and you have already paid a deposit, they'll offer another vehicle instead of a refund.

Individuals and dealerships falsely listing JDM cars are often called out in JDM car groups. That's why it's recommended to do some research first. If you're buying a car from another state, check their Google ratings; reviews should tell you a lot. If a listing baited you, move on to other cars and call the seller out in the same groups to help other buyers. But don't bow out without a fight if you paid a deposit.

Vehicle History Manipulation

JDM car history manipulation mostly happens when a car has been stolen, wrecked, or has had extensive work done to it that might reduce its value. It's almost the same as manipulating the car's title, but sellers go as far as altering the VIN, auction sheets, and maintenance and repair records. For example, if a Mazda RX-7 has had its engine replaced, which is not uncommon, the seller omits this in the maintenance and repair records. The car is then listed with an "original engine," which is good if the old engine was faulty. But knowing it was changed goes a long way in planning for mods and maintenance schedules.

JDM car VINs are altered for the same reasons as titles. One way to know if a JDM car's VIN is altered is by checking if the VIN plate or engraving has been scrapped, repainted, or re-etched. Also, if the VIN plate looks too new, you should ask the owner if it has been replaced. You can't expect a car to be over 25 years old and have a spanking-new VIN plate, regardless of how well the previous owners kept it.

Another way to check if the VIN on a JDM car is real is to find other VIN plates or etchings. For example, on Nissan Skylines, you can find the VIN on a plaque at the bottom of the windshield, on the driver's side door sill, passenger storage compartment, or on the firewall. Any Skyline has a VIN plate or etching at two of the listed locations. VIN locations on other JDM cars differ, so before viewing a car, do research not only on the VIN location but also the appearance.

Besides fake VINs, fake auction sheets are common, especially on recently imported cars. An auction sheet provides an overview of the car, gives a score based on its condition, and is provided after experts in auction houses complete a thorough inspection of the car. If the car is noted to have issues after importation, the seller will plausibly obtain a

fake auction sheet if they fear they'll incur a loss if they sell the car without notifying the buyer of the issues. These issues could be easy to fix, such as dents on body panels or serious ones, such as undercarriage rust.

How do you know that a JDM car has a fake auction sheet? First, you can always request the seller provide the name of the auction house from which the car was bought. Most Japanese auction houses store information on cars sold online, where you'll find the car you're buying and the original auction sheet. You can also compare the auction sheet presented with an authenticated one and check for irregularities. If none of these options works, get the car re-inspected by a professional.

(Insert auction grading table and auction sheet sample from the older article and remove the "how to assess the condition of a JDM car before purchase and what to look for when buying a JDM car" H2s)

Read; [How to read Japanese auction sheets.](#)

Individuals posing as representatives of importers/exporters and dealerships

It's not unusual for JDM car importers/exporters and dealerships to issue statements concerning fraudulent individuals posing as their representatives. They will put themselves out there claiming to be representatives in a particular location, and some go even further and create emails with the business names to look more legit. Employees sometimes operate outside the business, which most JDM car businesses' policies do not allow.

When in contact with them, they'll try to make you an enticing offer on a car not listed on the original website claiming that you'll be given priority before other buyers. Since most companies request a deposit, the scammers will do the same and give you a date for collection, only to be told such a person doesn't work there when you arrive to collect the car.

Businesses dealing with the importation, exportation, and sales of JDM cars only provide a representative after you contact them using the contact numbers or emails on their official website and socials. Most even have policies that prevent employees from contacting buyers outside the business operations. You can make inquiries, but the process must go through the proper channels when buying or importing a car.

How to Verify a JDM Dealership/Importer/Exporter is Not a Scam

JDM car importers/exporters

To tell if an exporter or importer business is fake, check their account's date of creation, engagements, physical location, company details, and nature of listings. A scammer will most likely operate on a new account with no engagements. They'll also have no physical location hence the lack of company details and will list highly sought-after cars for lower prices to attract buyers. If testimonials and reviews exist, they'll probably have been doctored, all with positive comments from fake accounts. No business has all positive comments and 5-star ratings, especially one that deals with JDM cars.

Individuals also help in the exportation of JDM cars from Japan. If they are Japan-based, you might be dealing with a broker, and it would be best if you have a contact in Japan to transact with them on your behalf. Testimonials also go a long way in verifying the legitimacy of a broker, and you can find these on auction forums. If you get a good broker, you can start shipping JDM cars yourself, especially if they also process shipping in Japan. This is cheaper than importing via a dealership.

https://youtu.be/8YdXyCHk_9M

JDM car dealerships

Most JDM car dealerships offer buyers the option of importing their cars of choice if whatever they have in their inventories doesn't meet the buyer's requirements. They then show buyers what they have in their Japan inventory and what they can get at auction. For this, the buyer is charged a deposit. And in most cases, it's non-refundable but is included in the payable balance if the buyer doesn't pay the total cost.

Some JDM dealerships deliver the car as agreed, but some do not; thus, they can be classified as scammers. Sometimes, the car that arrives has tons of issues meaning that an inspection wasn't done before shipping or the car doesn't arrive at all. Some cars arrive in excellent condition but develop problems shortly after, and the dealerships

fail to repair them, as quoted in the warranty statements. The same happens with cars bought from local inventory since they also provide warranties.

JDM dealerships with revoked licenses operate in hiding, or their owners continue to ship cars, using their experience in the industry to convince buyers. [For example, in 2020, Florida HSMV suspended SOHO imports, J-Spec Garage importation rights, and nearly 400 titles of cars the two dealerships had imported between 2014 and 2020.](#) According to the authorities, complaints from these two companies had been filed before their licenses were suspended.

Buying from a reputable JDM car dealership is the only way you get a better chance of not getting scammed. These have been in business for years, with countless customers who can vouch for them. Sure, some have higher prices, but would you instead save a few thousand dollars and risk getting a lemon or not getting your dream JDM car?

[Which is better; buying an already imported JDM car or importing one?](#)

(New H2)

To avoid JDM car import scams, most JDM car buyers lean towards buying cars locally since they can physically view the car and not buy it if there are red flags. However, there's still a chance that you might get scammed if the green flags are too good to notice the red flags.

You'll buy a clean Mazda RX-7 and decide to drive it home, only to discover that it's burning too much oil and has a compression leak when you're halfway home. Or you buy a JDM car with a duplicate title, and it turns out to have been reported stolen when registering it. It's not once that owners have lamented about such and even worse cases that give them PTSD so bad that they vow not to buy another JDM car. Importing a JDM car sight unseen is not for the weak. It doesn't matter whether you're importing it through a dealership or a broker or whether you've paid for it or not. The fear of the car not getting to you will always be there.

So, buying an already imported JDM car is a better option if you prefer not to wait and have constant butterflies in your stomach whenever you think of the car. Importation is only for those who prefer that the car they're buying meets all their requirements without compromising or singling any out. Some buyers even go to the extent of flying out to Japan to view exporters' inventories and visit auction houses to find the perfect cars.

[How to Protect Yourself Against JDM Import Scams](#)

[Verify documents \(add from the section in the old article\)](#)

[Familiarize yourself with JDM cars](#)

You just don't wake up and decide to buy or import a JDM car. Sure, you have the money, but what do you know about the car you'll buy and JDM cars in general? Buying a JDM car differs slightly from buying a locally manufactured used car. You must know the best time to buy a JDM car if you're importing one, what common issues are shared across JDM cars, what maintenance and running costs are like, and which are the best dealers to consider in your state if you're buying one locally. On the specific JDM car you desire, you must know the pros and cons of ownership, issues to expect, and what to look for when buying, among other factors.

Wondering where to start? We have an array of [JDM car buying guides, importation, and lifestyle tips](#) to kickstart your journey into JDM car ownership.

[Join JDM car groups and communities](#)

Online resources don't do much with regard to familiarizing yourself with JDM cars. By joining JDM car groups and communities, you'll learn the buying and importation hacks and how to navigate ownership since it can be grueling with some cars. You'll also find some JDMC cars listed for sale in these groups and communities, which you are better off buying, especially if a seller is a renowned member. Yet, this doesn't mean that you should take their word that every detail on the listing is true.

[Ask the help of an experienced JDM car buyer if you are a first-time JDM car buyer](#)

If you have made some friends who already own JDM cars, they might offer a hand when scouting for potential purchases and when doing pre-purchase inspections. They wouldn't say no if you ask and show a gesture of

appreciation by buying pizza or burgers after purchasing the car. This is how friendships are formed, and memories are made in the JDM car scene.

Avoid unverified payment methods

When buying a JDM car, it's crucial to exercise caution and only make a deposit or pay the total price only to a verified and secure payment method. Only agree to buy in cash or bank transfer if everything about the car checks out, and you can reach the seller if anything goes wrong. If you're making a deposit or don't trust the seller, deposit the funds in a verified Escrow account since fake accounts are increasingly becoming common.

What happens if you get scammed buying a JDM car

Actions to take after getting scammed when buying a JDM car depend on whether you met the seller. For instance, if you got scammed by an individual posing as an exporter in Japan or baited by a fake listing, there's not much you can do but learn from your mistakes and move on. However, if the car was listed in an online marketplace such as eBay, you can file a report that launches an investigation, and there's a high probability you might get your money back. Also, some payment providers might be willing to investigate transactions made from your end and help you recover your funds.

A JDM car dealership or individual that doesn't deliver the car as is in the listing can be classified as a scammer. In this case, the first thing to do is make contact and express your concern. If they are willing to resolve the issue, it better be done in writing. What do you do if they don't fix the problem or ignore your efforts to make contact? Gather receipts and documents relevant to the purchase, report the scam, and consult with an attorney who specializes in consumer protection cases. The seller might be intimidated if you choose this route since what follows next is a civil lawsuit.