

VIN Breakdown

Dissecting a VIN

Here is a VIN example with its breakdown, section by section:

1G6AF5SX6D0125409

World Manufacturer Identifier (1G6)

The first three digits make up the World Manufacturer Identifier.

Position one represents the nation of origin, or the final point of assembly. For instance, cars made in the U.S. start with 1, 4 or 5, Canada is 2, Mexico is 3, Japan is J, South Korea is K, England is S, Germany is W and Sweden or Finland is Y.

Position two tells you about the manufacturer. In some cases, it's the letter that begins the manufacturer's name. For example, A is for Audi, B is for BMW, G is for General Motors, L is for Lincoln and N is for Nissan. But that "A" can also stand for Jaguar or Mitsubishi and an "R" can also mean Audi. It may sound confusing, but the next digit ties it all together.

Position three, when combined with the first two digits, indicates the vehicle's type or manufacturing division. In our example, 1G6 means a Cadillac passenger car. 1G1 means Chevrolet passenger cars and 1GC means Chevrolet trucks. There have been many variations on the World Manufacturer Identifier as brands have come and gone.

Vehicle Descriptor Section (AF5SX6)

Digits 4 through 9 make up the Vehicle Descriptor Section.

Positions four through eight describe the car with such information as the model, body type, restraint system, transmission type and engine code.

Position nine, the "check" digit, is used to detect invalid VINs, based on a mathematical formula that was developed by the Department of Transportation.

Vehicle Identifier Section (D0125409)

Digits 10 through 17 make up the Vehicle Identifier Section.

Position 10 indicates the model year. The letters from B-Y correspond to the model years 1981-2000. There is no I, O, Q, U or Z. From 2001-'09, the numbers one through nine were used in place of numbers. The alphabet started over from A in 2010 and will continue until 2030.

Is it confusing? Yes. So here's a list of the model years since 1981: B=1981, C='82, D='83, E='84, F='85, G='86, H='87, J='88, K='89, L='90, M='91, N='92, P='93, R='94, S='95, T='96, V='97, W='98, X='99, Y=2000, 1='01, 2='02, 3='03, 4='04, 5='05, 6='06, 7='07, 8='08, 9='09, A=2010, B='11, C='12, D='13, E='14, F='15, G='16, H='17, J='18

The letter or number in position 11 indicates the manufacturing plant in which the vehicle was assembled. Each automaker has its own set of plant codes.

The last 6 digits (positions 12 through 17) are the production sequence numbers. This is the number each car receives on the assembly line. In the case of our Cadillac ATS, it was the 125,409th car to roll off the assembly line in Lansing, Michigan.

(based on article by <http://www.edmunds.com>)