

Questions To Ask Before You Travel

Twelve questions and one photo request that decide whether a machine is worth driving across the county to see.

Ten minutes on the phone or in messages, before you commit to a journey. The order is deliberate: the first four are disqualifying, and there is no point asking the rest until they are answered.

1 • PAPERWORK — ASK THESE FIRST

☐ Is there a title, and is it in your name?

"I can get one" is a no

☐ What is the VIN? Can you send a photo of it?

The one thing you can check from home

☐ Does the VIN on the paperwork match the one on the machine?

☐ Is there anything owed on it?

IF ANY OF THOSE FOUR FAIL, STOP HERE

A machine that cannot be registered is worth its parts value and nothing more. That may still be a deal worth doing — but it is a different deal at a different price, and you should know that before you drive anywhere. If the seller will not photograph the VIN at all, walk away.

2 • HISTORY

☐ How long have you had it, and why are you selling?

☐ How many owners before you, as far as you know?

☐ What is the mileage, and does the odometer work?

☐ Has it been off the road, and for how long?

☐ Has it ever been dropped or crashed?

3 • RUNNING

☐ When did it last run, and for how long?

☐ Does it start from cold on the button, first time?

☐ What is not working on it right now?

Ask it openly — most sellers answer honestly

☐ What has been replaced recently?

☐ Is there anything you would fix before riding it far?

4 · THE FOUR PHOTOGRAPHS TO ASK FOR

Each one answers a question you would otherwise drive to find out

ASK FOR	WHAT IT TELLS YOU
The VIN, close and in focus	That it exists, is legible, has not been tampered with, and matches the paperwork
The whole left side of the engine	Oil leaks, a missing CVT cover bolt, a mismatched or replacement engine
Both tyre sidewalls	Tread, cracking, and whether the sizes are the ones the machine should have
The dashboard with the engine running	That it runs, that the odometer works, and what the warning lights are doing

THE RESPONSE MATTERS AS MUCH AS THE PHOTOGRAPHS

A seller who sends four clear photographs within an hour is telling you something about how the machine has been looked after. One who sends three blurry ones taken at night, or who says the phone is broken, is telling you something too. Neither is proof, and both are information you did not have.

5 · BEFORE YOU SET OFF

- ☐ Asked them NOT to warm it up before you arrive
A warm engine hides the cold-start faults that matter most
- ☐ Agreed a time and confirmed it on the day
- ☐ Printed the inspection checklist to take with you
- ☐ Decided your maximum price before leaving, and written it down
- ☐ Told somebody where you are going
- ☐ Arranged to bring somebody with you if paying cash

WHAT YOU WERE TOLD

SELLER NAME	ASKING PRICE	DATE OF CALL

VIN GIVEN

ANYTHING THEY SAID THAT YOU WANT TO CHECK AGAINST THE MACHINE

TAKE THIS WITH YOU

The gap between what you were told on the phone and what you find in the flesh is the most useful single piece of information in a used purchase. You can only see that gap if you wrote down the first half.

Need to work out what you actually own?

The Scooter Parts Registry is a free public record of the Chinese factories behind US-market scooters, ATVs and go-karts — brand, engine family, VIN prefix, factory and related machines. No account, no email.

thescooterparts.com/identify