

Before the driveway handoff: what both parties leave with

A weekend private sale often ends in a driveway, a slip, or a barn — not at a dealer desk. Before keys or cash move, both sides should leave with the same written story: who sold what, for how much, with which photos and payment proof.

Saturday and Sunday are when a lot of private deals finish. Someone drives over after lunch. The bike is on the trailer. The boat is still in the slip. The trailer and the hull each have their own numbers. Money is already “on the way.” That is exactly when people skip the boring steps.

Do not. The boring steps are the ones that settle arguments later.

Match the thing to the paper

Whatever you are buying or selling has an identifier. On a car or motorcycle it is usually a VIN. On a boat it is usually a HIN on the hull. On machinery it is often a serial plate. Read that plate out loud. Copy it onto the bill of sale from the plate, not from memory, and not from last week’s listing.

Then read the same string on the title, the registration, or whatever paper the seller is actually holding. Year, make, and model should agree with what you see. A one-character mismatch is a stop, not a typo to “fix” so the copies look neat.

Write the private contract before anyone signs

A bill of sale is the private deal: who sold which item to whom, for how much, on which date, in what condition, and with which extras. Write names that match the title or registration. Write the price, any deposit already paid, and the balance that must clear before keys move. Write what is included and what is not — trailer, spare key, electronics, tools. “Everything in the photo” is not a list.

Most private used sales are as-is and where-is. If something is broken, put it in writing. If a lender is still named on the title, stop. A text that says the loan is paid off is not a release. Clear the lien before money and the item leave.

Photos, payment, and the handoff note

Shoot the identifier plate close enough to read. Shoot a walkaround on this day, in this light. Shoot damage you are disclosing. Shoot the title or registration whole page for the private packet. Crop sensitive data only on copies you share publicly. Both parties should keep the unedited files.

The purchase price moves between buyer and seller. A software fee for a packet is a different charge. Keep the confirmation that names who paid, who was paid, when, and the same identifier if the memo allows it. Do not hand over the only keys on a payment that is still “submitted.”

Write the local date, time, and time zone. Write who has possession after. Count the keys against the bill of sale. If someone else watched the signing, write their name. That is a witness you can find later — not a notary. Title, registration, and any agency filings still open on government sites. A private packet does not replace them.

Soft product note

If you want the folder slots already laid out — bill of sale, identifier photo, title copies, payment proof, handoff note — start a packet at <https://recordofsale.com>. The fee is software only. You still move the purchase funds yourselves, still sign the state or Coast Guard paper the way that office requires, and still file on government sites. This note is general information, not legal advice, and not a DMV filing service.

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