



Dealer Path USA

State-by-state startup education for future dealers

FREE STARTER CHECKLIST

Dealer License Starter Checklist

15 things to check before you spend money on a dealer lot, lease, bond, insurance, or application steps.

State-by-state roadmap

Beginner friendly

No official-course claim

Built before you spend

Important: This checklist is for educational purposes only. It is not legal, tax, financial, insurance, zoning, or licensing advice. It is not an official state-approved pre-licensing course and does not provide an official license certificate. Always verify requirements with the proper state agency, city/county office, and qualified professionals.

Start with the roadmap before the dealership.

Use this checklist before signing a lease, buying a bond, purchasing insurance, or submitting dealer license paperwork.

The 15-point checklist

Use these checks to avoid the most expensive beginner mistakes before committing money.

1

Confirm your license type

Identify whether you need a used dealer, wholesale dealer, independent dealer, broker, or another state-specific license.

2

Find the official agency

Start from the state DMV, motor vehicle commission, secretary of state, or official licensing authority - not random blogs.

3

Do not sign a lease first

A location can look perfect and still be rejected because of zoning, office, signage, or display rules.

4

Ask zoning about the exact address

Ask the city or county whether used motor vehicle sales are allowed at that specific address.

5

Get landlord permission in writing

Confirm the landlord allows vehicle sales, signage, inspection access, and use of the address for licensing.

6

Check office/display requirements

Many states require an office, business records, posted hours, signage, and controlled vehicle display space.

7

Choose the business structure

Decide whether to use an LLC, corporation, sole proprietor, or other structure before ordering documents.

8

Keep names consistent

The legal name should match across lease, bond, insurance, tax registration, bank account, and application.

9

Understand the dealer bond

A bond amount is not always cash paid upfront, but claims may create repayment responsibility.

10

Plan garage/dealer insurance

Personal auto insurance is not dealer insurance. Confirm the required policy type and limits.

11

Check training requirements

Some states require a pre-license course, dealer education certificate, or written exam.

12

Prepare fingerprints/background checks

Many states require fingerprints, background checks, or owner/officer disclosures.

13

Time tax/resale registration correctly

Do not register under the wrong business name or address before the structure is clear.

14

Build your application folder

Create organized folders for certificates, zoning emails, lease, bond, insurance, fingerprints, tax, and application documents.

15

Prepare for inspection

Many applicants fail because the location is not ready when the inspector reviews office, signage, display, and records setup.

The safe startup sequence

This order helps reduce wasted money and avoid mismatched documents.

- 1 Learn your state license path**
Confirm the official agency and license type.
- 2 Research locations**
Shortlist properties but do not sign yet.
- 3 Verify zoning**
Email the city/county with the exact address and intended use.
- 4 Confirm landlord approval**
Get written permission for dealership use, signage, and inspection.
- 5 Finalize business identity**
Set the company name, EIN, and address before ordering bond or insurance.
- 6 Prepare documents**
Training, fingerprints, bond, insurance, tax registration, application, and inspection readiness.

Important: This checklist is for educational purposes only. It is not legal, tax, financial, insurance, zoning, or licensing advice. It is not an official state-approved pre-licensing course and does not provide an official license certificate. Always verify requirements with the proper state agency, city/county office, and qualified professionals.

Copy-and-use email templates

These templates are starting points. Adjust them to your situation and verify with the proper agency.

Email to zoning office

Subject: Zoning Confirmation Request for Used Motor Vehicle Dealership

Hello,

I am interested in using the property located at [PROPERTY ADDRESS] for a used motor vehicle dealership.

Before signing a lease or moving forward, I would like to confirm whether this use is allowed at this location.

Could you please confirm:

1. Whether used motor vehicle sales are allowed at this address.
2. Whether outdoor vehicle display/sales is allowed.
3. Whether any special permit, conditional use approval, or zoning approval is required.
4. Whether there are parking, signage, or office requirements I should know about.

Thank you,
[YOUR NAME]

Email to landlord or broker

Subject: Question About Vehicle Sales Use at [PROPERTY ADDRESS]

Hello,

I am interested in the property at [PROPERTY ADDRESS] and would like to confirm whether the landlord would allow the space to be used for a licensed used motor vehicle dealership.

Before moving forward, I need to confirm that the property can support:

1. A dedicated dealership office.
2. Vehicle display for sale.
3. Required business signage.
4. Use of the property address for a dealer license application.
5. Access for a state/location inspection if required.

Please let me know if this use would be acceptable to the landlord.

Thank you,
[YOUR NAME]

Common mistakes to avoid

- ✓ Signing a lease before zoning confirmation.
- ✓ Buying a bond or insurance before the business name/address are final.
- ✓ Assuming commercial zoning automatically allows vehicle sales.
- ✓ Using different business names across documents.
- ✓ Submitting paperwork before the location is inspection-ready.
- ✓ Taking advice from a broker or friend without confirming with the official agency.

Your next best step

Use this checklist to organize your first questions, then build a state-specific action plan from official sources before spending serious money.