**California Car License Plates**

(a simple abbreviated summary)

When was a car registered the first time with the standard permanent California license plate?

1956-1962 – AAA 000 Black on yellow, CALIFORNIA letters on left

1963-1969 – AAA 000 Gold on black, CALIFORNIA letters center (can be ordered as a legacy plate)

1970-1980 – 000 AAA Gold on blue, CALIFORNIA letters

1981-1986 – 1ABC234 Gold on blue, CALIFORNIA letters

1987-1992 – 2ABC234 Blue on white, Red CALIFONIA letters on Gold Sun, some with ’The Golden State’

1993-1998 – 3ABC234 Blue on white, Red script **California**

1999-2003 – 4ABC234 Blue on white, Red script **California**, (99-00) ‘SESQUICENTENNIAL – 150 YEARS’

2004-2008 – 5ABC234 Blue on white, Red script **California**

2009-2012 – 6ABC234 Blue on white, Red script **California**; ‘dmv.ca.gov’ at bottom from 6TPW

2013-2016 – 7ABC234 Blue on white, Red script **California**; ‘dmv.ca.gov’ at bottom

2017-2020 – 8ABC234 Blue on white, Red script **California**; ‘dmv.ca.gov’ at bottom

Delta in years backwards from 2016 is 4,4,5,5,6,6,6 so ---

In 2017, 8A is expected for the first time (observed makes in parentheses)

7Y to 7A is 1 to 4 years old (about 40% of cars in Woodland Hills, CA)

6Z to 6A is 5 to 8 years old (about 30% of cars in Woodland Hills, CA)

5Z to 5A is 9 to 13 years old (about 20% of cars in Woodland Hills, CA)

4Z to 4A is 14 to 18 years old (Japanese and Mercedes)

3Z to 3A is 19 to 24 years old (Toyotas and Hondas)

2Z to 2A is 25 to 30 years old (a few Toyotas, our Dodge Ram van and Subaru wagon)

1Z to 1A is 31 to 35 years old (I have seen none)

000 to 999 is 36 to 46 years old (one BMW)

This is not a game or diversion for drivers of any vehicle.

You should only look at license plates from the passenger or back seats or when parked.

Several surveys were done by wandering through parking lots.

Additional information:

**California** started the 1ABC234 **license plate format** in 1982 with 1AAA000. In 1993, **plate numbering** passed 3AAA000. A car registered at the end of 2010 had **license plates** that began with 6E. Thus, all cars registered since 1993 with a sequential (non-vanity/special) **plate** will start with 3,4,5,6, or 7. (as of December 2016)

<http://www.15q.net/ca.html> - Historical license perspective

<https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv/detail/online/elp/elp> - Currently available personalized plates from DMV. Antique gold on black license plates from the 1960’s is an option. I have seen more of these recently, now that I have been looking for them.

There is a lot of resource wastage when older cars are scrapped. I am surprised at my observed distribution of cars in LA, where very few have 20+ year-old standard license plates. However, most very old cars have personalized license plates, although such plates can be moved to another vehicle. Trucks (including pickups) are generally older, and have a different set of licenses. Since there is no winter snow, ice, gravel, or salt on the roads, I would expect cars to last longer in LA LA LAND.

EPILOG: On 2017 September 17, I saw my first “8 plate”. It was 8ALN. That combination should have been after about 300,000 plates had been issued. Why did it take so long for me to see an “8 plate”?