



VEHICLE & PROPERTY

Keep or Surrender Your Totaled Vehicle Workbook

Compare financial, title, inspection, insurance and practical consequences of keeping a totaled vehicle before committing.

WHAT THIS WORKBOOK HELPS YOU DO

01

Complete your permission and title review

02

Complete your settlement option comparison

03

Complete your feasibility budget

For people handling accident-related paperwork and preparing clear, evidence-backed questions.

Use it on screen or on paper. Save a personal copy before entering information. Blank response areas are fillable; printed copies work just as well. Keep completed copies private.

Scope. Educational organization tools, not legal, medical, tax or financial advice. No claim result, coverage decision or payment is promised. Verify policy language, current local rules and all deadlines with the appropriate professional or official source.



[START HERE](#)

Start with a clear working file

Work on one claim, account or issue at a time. Keep originals unchanged and label working copies with a short evidence ID. Complete the guidance in order, then use the worksheets to turn questions into an organized next step.

A practical order

01 Read the four guidance pages before filling the worksheets. Mark facts you can support and questions that still need an answer.

[GUIDANCE / PAGES 03-06](#)

02 Use the fictional examples to check your method. Their facts and dollar amounts do not describe your claim or predict an outcome.

[EXAMPLES / PAGE 07](#)

03 Complete the four working sheets, then use the readiness check and next-step page. Duplicate a worksheet when you need another record.

[WORKSHEETS / PAGES 08-11](#)

Protect your information

Store completed copies somewhere private. Use a claim or account suffix when a full identifier is unnecessary. Share only relevant copies through a verified recipient and appropriate channel. A saved PDF can contain personal information even when it is not open on screen.

Before a deadline. Do not wait to finish this workbook when a notice, release, court paper or policy deadline needs attention. Verify the actual requirement and seek qualified help promptly.



GUIDANCE 1

01

Define the retention decision

Obtain written settlement options before deciding to keep the vehicle. Record payment if the insurer takes the salvage and payment if you retain it, including the salvage deduction. Confirm the decision date and storage situation. The Texas Department of Insurance explains that retaining a totaled vehicle can reduce payment by salvage value. That does not mean every owner can keep every vehicle on any terms. This workbook compares options with their permissions and costs. It does not determine whether the damaged vehicle can be driven, repaired or registered.

Confirm ownership and lender authority

Locate the title and identify all owners, lenders and lessors. Ask the relevant institution whether retention is permitted and what documents or payment arrangements it requires. Possession does not necessarily settle another party's ownership or security interest. Record written answers rather than assuming an insurer's option overrides a lender. If names, status or authority are disputed, pause for qualified advice. Keep settlement payment, payoff and transfer paperwork separate so an apparently affordable retention choice does not hide an unresolved financial or ownership obligation.

RELATED WORKING SHEETS

- [Permission and title review](#)
- [Settlement option comparison](#)

Sources for this page: [1], [2], [3]. See the linked source guide.



GUIDANCE 2

02

Identify title consequences

Use official state motor-vehicle instructions for the exact title category. Total-loss, salvage, rebuilt and nonrepairable terms do not mean the same thing everywhere. California distinguishes salvage that may qualify for re-registration after required steps from a nonrepairable certificate preventing re-registration. Do not apply that example nationwide. Record requirements, inspections, fees and restrictions from current sources. Ask whether operation or registration is currently allowed. Do not assume any title brand can later be removed simply because repairs are completed or the vehicle runs.

Obtain professional repair information

Obtain written input from qualified repair and inspection professionals about known damage, further assessment needs, required inspections and a realistic cost range. Do not rely only on a photograph, optimistic parts estimate or informal assurance. Include professional fees, transport and potential additional damage. This workbook is not a repair manual or safety certification. For electric or hybrid vehicles, use appropriate specialists and manufacturer-specific handling guidance. Keep unresolved technical feasibility visible instead of converting uncertainty into a precise-looking budget.

RELATED WORKING SHEETS

- Permission and title review
- Feasibility budget

Sources for this page: [1], [2], [3]. See the linked source guide.



GUIDANCE 3

03

Price both paths completely

Compare surrender and retention over the same horizon. Include revised insurance payment, lender payoff, salvage deduction, repairs, inspections, title/registration fees, transport, storage and substitute transportation. Mark each amount as quoted, estimated or unknown. Avoid double-counting charges already included in a quote. Label any contingency as an assumption. A positive cash result is only one consideration: the vehicle may remain unavailable, unsuitable or uninsurable for the intended coverage. Complete permission, registration, safety and insurance checks before treating the cheaper-looking option as feasible.

Verify insurance and future use

Ask an insurer about coverage for the exact title status and intended use, requesting a written quote or explanation. Do not assume the existing policy continues unchanged after total loss or rebuilding. Consider downtime and ask about applicable future-sale disclosure requirements. Do not promise a resale value or easy removal of a title brand. Record the practical reason for retention and evidence supporting feasibility. If coverage, registration or safe repair remains unresolved, mark it as a decision blocker rather than hoping the issue disappears later.

Check these feasibility questions alongside the surrender-versus-retention budget.



Sources for this page: [1], [2], [3]. See the linked source guide.



GUIDANCE 4

04

Review transfer and settlement papers

Read settlement, salvage and title papers together. Identify who receives the vehicle, title, keys and money, and which claim rights the document addresses. A transfer is not necessarily the same as a limited property-damage settlement. Seek advice if a release affects injury claims, loan obligations or other rights. Never alter official title documents or conceal a brand. Keep copies of signed papers and current offers. The decision should rest on final terms, not an earlier verbal estimate.

Execute the chosen path

Use a path-specific checklist after deciding. For surrender, verify authorized pickup, personal belongings, title instructions and payment. For retention, verify lawful custody, professional work, inspections and agency requirements before road use. Track actual costs against the budget and retain receipts. California's current revived-salvage instructions illustrate that multiple registration and inspection documents may be required, but use your own state's rules. Close when ownership, payment and permitted use are confirmed, or clearly identify the remaining professional or agency action.

RELATED WORKING SHEETS

- Decision and completion gates
- Permission and title review

Sources for this page: [1], [2], [3]. See the linked source guide.



FICTIONAL EXAMPLES

Work through the examples

These invented cases demonstrate the method. They are not case results, estimates of what you will receive or statements of universal rights.

01 Example 1

Compare remaining cash and costs, not just the headline offer.

Illustrative debt-free vehicle: \$12,000 surrender offer; \$9,500 retention offer. Quoted repairs \$5,000 + inspection/title \$600 + transport/storage \$300 leave \$3,600 before contingencies and ongoing costs. This proves neither safety nor future value.

02 Example 2

Title status can stop an attractive budget.

A California vehicle has a nonrepairable certificate. Flag DMV's re-registration prohibition rather than treating it as an ordinary rebuild.

03 Example 3

Permission is a separate gate.

The insurer offers retention, but lender agreement is missing. Mark the decision pending.



WORKSHEET 1

01

Permission and title review

Complete this sheet from the underlying documents. Put the document name and date beside each important fact; write "unverified" rather than guess. Use an additional copy for another record.

Owners/lender/lessor

Title held by

Retention permission

Exact title category

State agency/source/date

Operation restrictions

Inspections

Open question

Related guidance: [Define the retention decision](#)



WORKSHEET 2

02

Settlement option comparison

Complete this sheet from the underlying documents. Put the document name and date beside each important fact; write "unverified" rather than guess. Use an additional copy for another record.

Surrender payment

Retention payment

Salvage deduction

Deductible

Loan payoff

Cash to owner

Quote status

Offer expiry

Related guidance: [Price both paths completely](#)



WORKSHEET 3

03

Feasibility budget

Complete this sheet from the underlying documents. Put the document name and date beside each important fact; write "unverified" rather than guess. Use an additional copy for another record.

Repair range

Professional inspection

Transport/storage

Title/registration

Substitute transportation

Contingency assumption

Insurance quote

Timeline

Total/unknowns

Related guidance: [Price both paths completely](#)



WORKSHEET 4

04

Decision and completion gates

Complete this sheet from the underlying documents. Put the document name and date beside each important fact; write "unverified" rather than guess. Use an additional copy for another record.

Professional repair assessment

Registration route

Insurance availability

Authority

Document review

Chosen path/reason

Pickup/inspection milestones

Final payment/status

Related guidance: [Review transfer and settlement papers](#)



READINESS REVIEW

Check the file before using it

REVIEW EACH ITEM BEFORE MOVING ON

- ☐ Authority confirmed?
- ☐ Exact title category verified?
- ☐ Professional assessment?
- ☐ Full budget?
- ☐ Insurance and legal road use feasible?

What still needs attention

Open fact or decision, who can resolve it, and the source needed

Completion standard. The working file is complete when the important facts are supported, the next action is assigned and any unresolved issues remain clearly visible. A completed checklist does not establish coverage, entitlement or legal compliance.



ACTION PLAN

Write down the next step

Choose the smallest useful next step. Make the request specific enough that the recipient can locate the record and explain or address the exact issue. Keep proof of what you sent and what came back.

The exact issue or request

Evidence IDs and document versions that support the request

Verified recipient and channel

Date sent and follow-up date

What response will resolve the issue, and what still needs professional review

Separate decisions. A courtesy follow-up date is not a legal deadline. A document request does not automatically pause another requirement. Do not sign, settle, move property or disclose sensitive records merely because a box on this page is complete.



REFERENCE GUIDE

Sources and scope

The linked official sources support the educational background. The forms and examples are original organization tools. Sources were checked on October 1, 2026; policies, procedures and law may change. Recheck the current source before relying on a rule.

[1] Texas Department of Insurance

Keeping the vehicle reduces proposed payment by salvage value. Scope: Texas guidance; rights and documents depend on circumstances and law.

<https://www.tdi.texas.gov/blog/my-totaled-car-is-worth-more-than-insurance-wants-to-pay.html>

[2] California DMV

Distinguishes salvage/nonrepairable categories and explains re-registration prohibition for nonrepairable certificates. Scope: California only; do not generalize.

<https://qr.dmv.ca.gov/portal/vehicle-registration/new-registration/total-loss-salvage-non-repairable-vehicles/>

[3] California DMV

Current revived-salvage registration and vehicle-safety-system inspection requirements. Scope: Use current guidance, not older PDFs listing superseded brake/light procedures.

<https://qr.dmv.ca.gov/portal/vehicle-registration/new-registration/junk-revived-salvage-vehicles/>

Keep the scope clear

No DIY rebuild or roadworthiness certification.

No title washing, guaranteed insurance or road use before requirements are met.

Do not evade lender interests or sign broad releases without review.