



# How NOT to buy a stolen



# in four easy steps



If you don't want to buy a stolen bike – and you want to help stop the rampant black market for bikes – use these 4 simple steps when buying online



## Check the Ad



Here are several red flags to watch out for when looking at ads online:



CARBON RACING BIKE: \$200

**THE PRICE IS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.** Stolen bikes are often wildly underpriced for a "quick sell."



**STOCK PHOTOS ARE SUSPECT.** Unless there is an actual photo of the bike for sale, beware.



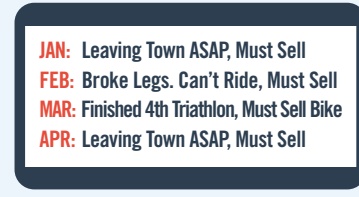
**SHORT ADS LACKING KEY INFO.** Beware! Ads like "slick track bike \$300" are suspicious and are usually written to avoid identification.



**OVERLY ANONYMOUS SELLERS.** Sellers who \*really\* go out of their way to remain anonymous - no name, no email, no phone number - are suspect. Some anonymity is OK, but a total lack of ID is usually a red flag.



**THE WORSE THE GRAMMAR AND SPELLING IN AN AD, THE MORE SUSPICIOUS YOU SHOULD BE.** Ads with bad spelling and grammar usually mean it's a dodgy seller.



**IF THEY SELL A LOT OF BIKES, OR THEIR STORIES ARE CONTRIVED AND CONTRADICTORY, BEWARE.** Sellers whose stories simply don't add up should be avoided at all costs.



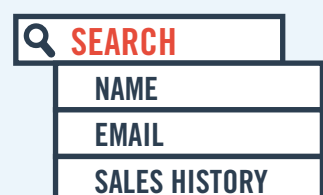
**REMEMBER:** You should always check a bike's details with the stolen bike reports at [stolen.bikeindex.org](http://stolen.bikeindex.org).



## Check the Seller



It pays to do your homework on the seller, too. Here are some steps you can take to determine a seller's legitimacy:



**CHECK SELLER'S INFO.** If you can't find a name, number, email, or sales history on your seller, be wary. Again, excessive reluctance to provide you with info usually means a seller is hiding something.



**LOTS OF BIKES FOR SALE?** Use common sense: if they sell lots of underpriced bikes from inside a storage unit or an alley, be extra cautious.



**MEETING PLACE.** For your own safety, be sure to schedule any real-life meetings near a local police department. At the very least, don't go alone, and meet in a well lit and crowded public meeting place.



**REMEMBER:** You can report noncooperative or questionable sellers to [bad sellers@bikeindex.org](mailto:bad sellers@bikeindex.org). We crowdsource our reports to help people make better informed - and safer - online purchases.



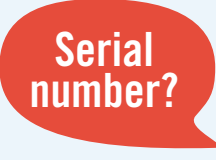
## Check the Serial



Checking a bike's serial number with [BikeIndex.org](http://stolen.bikeindex.org) is the single most important step you can take when examining a bike.

<http://stolen.bikeindex.org>

OR [@isitstolen](https://twitter.com/isitstolen)



**CHECK THE SERIAL NUMBER.** To see if a serial has been reported stolen, enter it at [stolen.bikeindex.org](http://stolen.bikeindex.org) or tweet it to [@isitstolen](https://twitter.com/isitstolen).

**SELLER CAN'T OR WON'T GIVE SERIAL.** If the seller refuses to give you the serial - or even let you look for one - walk away. Please also report them to [bad sellers@bikeindex.org](mailto:bad sellers@bikeindex.org)

**A FILED-OFF OR HIDDEN SERIAL.** If the serial number has been filed off or covered up, it's probably a stolen bike. Please don't buy it, and report it to [bad sellers@bikeindex.org](mailto:bad sellers@bikeindex.org)



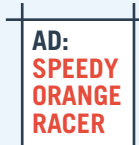
**REMEMBER:** It only takes a few seconds to check a bike's serial number at [stolen.bikeindex.org](http://stolen.bikeindex.org) - or by tweeting it to our Twitterbot [@isitstolen](https://twitter.com/isitstolen).



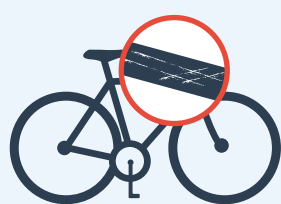
## Check the Bike



When examining the bike, be on the lookout for any of these red flags:



**BIKE DOESN'T MATCH AD** Thieves will try to "bait and switch" bikes - or misreport details like size and color - so look for differences from what was advertised.



**SCRATCHES ON FRAME** Look for telltale scratches or dents where a lock was forced open or cut off.



**MISMATCHED BIKE** Use your common sense: If the seller is clueless about the bike they are selling - or they are selling a bike that obviously doesn't match their height or size - they're likely selling a stolen bike.



**MISMATCHED PARTS** Thieves often mix and match parts to avoid detection. If it feels like a "frankenbike," beware.



**REMEMBER:** Thieves often misreport bike details in ads, and will mix and match seats, saddles, wheels, and grip tape to hide a stolen bike's origin. Again, you can always report questionable sellers with suspect bikes to [bad sellers@bikeindex.org](mailto:bad sellers@bikeindex.org).



BikeIndex.org is a free, open source bicycle registration database run by people who love their bikes - and hate bike thieves. Through BikeIndex.org, our tools, and our partnerships across the world, we make stolen bikes harder to sell and easier to recover. All for free!



SIMPLE



SECURE



FREE

BIKEINDEX.ORG