

How to Buy Military Surplus Vehicles

Thousands of former military items are sold to the public every year, either singly or in lots. Here's how to keep an eye out for the vehicle you want.

Steps:

1. Log on to the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service's Web site, which lists all surplus goods for sale worldwide, along with instructions for buying or bidding. The information is there, although the setup doesn't seem user-friendly at first.
2. Follow the link for Sales Customers, select Buy DRMS Property and then choose Do a Property Search. From there, you can search for a vehicle using a number of paths. For example, you can search by Commodity Category, then select Ground Transportation Equipment and hit Submit Search.
3. Browse through the list that appears next. It usually runs more to heavy equipment than to passenger vehicles, but it's also likely to have everything from auto parts, to cars, to cargo trucks, to railway cars.
4. Order catalogs if you want to skip the Web site. But catalogs are not just less timely, they're also less precise because you have to sift through lists of all the sales in your region and maybe elsewhere.
5. Find out where you have to go in person, and when, to inspect any vehicle that interests you.
6. Read carefully about the procedure for that particular auction or sale, and follow those instructions.

Tips:

- In a process called reutilization, the U.S. military offers all surplus items, including vehicles, first to other branches of the military and government, then to state and local governments, and then sometimes to nonprofit groups. Only items not selected for use elsewhere are put up for public sale.
- Because of safety concerns, the government does not sell surplus military-equipped jeeps, humvees (hummers) or any other off-road vehicles to the public.
- Check out any vehicle thoroughly before you negotiate to buy it - condition varies and sales are final.
- Call the Battle Creek (Michigan) Customer Support Center at (888) 352-9333, if you need more details or want to order catalogs.

Warnings:

- Avoid companies that sell information about government surplus sales. The same information is available free to anyone who checks the Web site or calls the toll-free number.

