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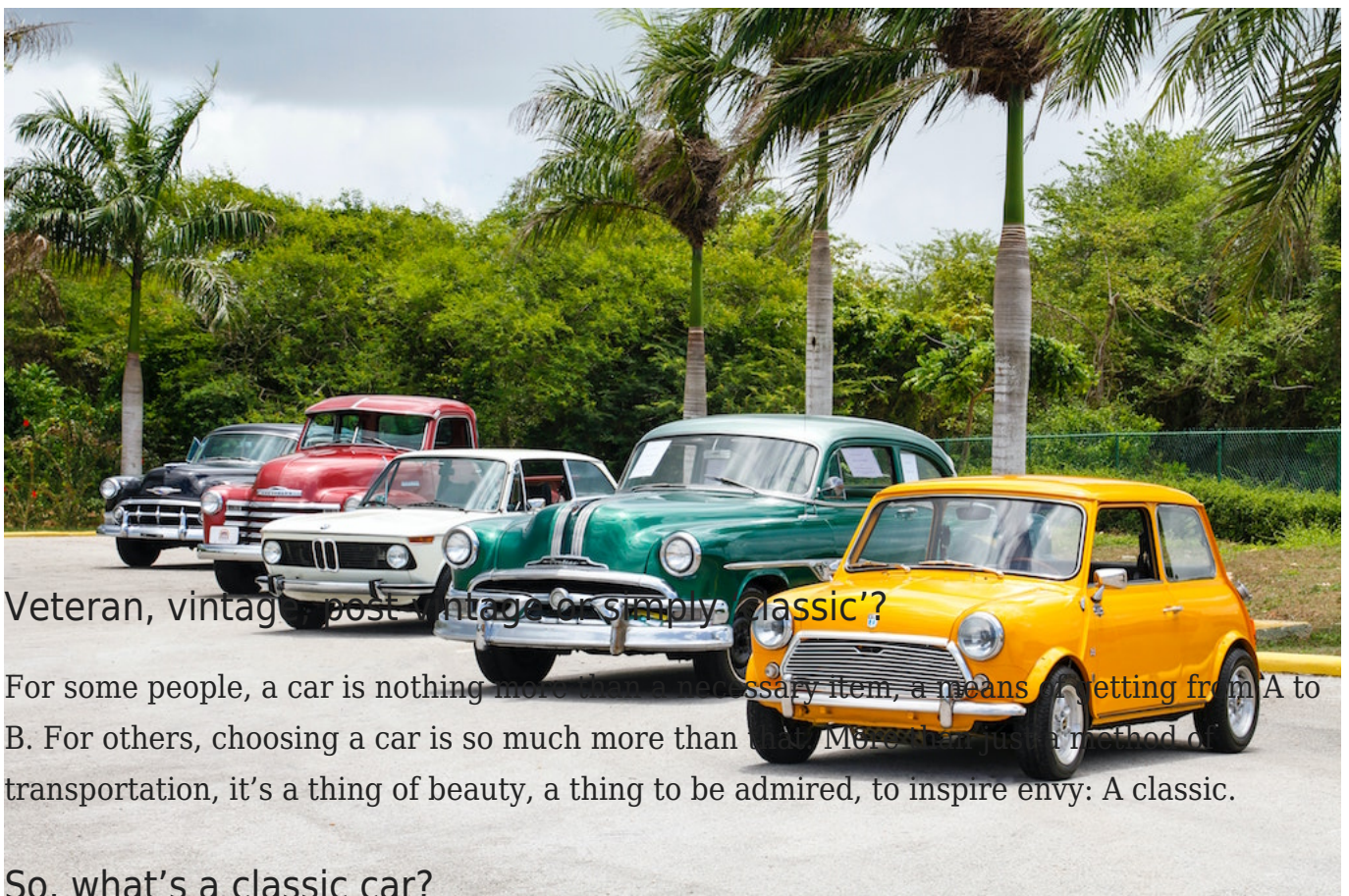
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When Does a Car Become a Classic? The Ultimate Guide to UK Classic Car History

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Veteran, vintage, post-vintage or simply 'classic'?

For some people, a car is nothing more than a necessary item, a means of getting from A to B. For others, choosing a car is so much more than that. More than just a method of transportation, it's a thing of beauty, a thing to be admired, to inspire envy: A classic.

So, what's a classic car?

Well, that's an easy one to answer: It's an old car. But how old? Older than 10 years? Than 20? Suddenly, we aren't so sure. In fact, there doesn't seem to be a reliable consensus about what defines a car as 'classic'. It isn't simply down to the age of the car; multiple factors can come into play.

But even if we're to agree that age seems like a sensible starting point, there still doesn't



seem to be a clear-cut definition as to what age a car must be to fall into this category.

Classic car insurance is usually needed or advisable for cars that are 20 years or older (and sometimes for 'special' cars younger than this); UK road tax exemption rules on classic cars state that cars have to be **40 years old or more**.

But then, the **HMRC definition** of a classic is a vehicle which is at least 15 years old, with a market value of £15K or more.

This somewhat undermines our idea of what a classic car is. It's not always an effortlessly classy, aesthetically pleasing thing of beauty. A rusty old banger can also, technically, be a classic car.

In search of a clear definition

Leaving aside conflicting guidelines, surely there's a more straightforward definition which is purely to do with age, engineering and aesthetics? The answer to this is yes, and no.

Veteran is the term we can apply to any car built before 31st December 1904, while 'Edwardian' covers vehicles constructed between 1905 and the end of WWI; nice and simple. A vintage car will have been built from the end of the Great War until 1930; and a post vintage car is generally considered to be manufactured at any time between 1930 and the end of WWII. Again, clear and straightforward.

Annoyingly though, post WWII, the definition of what constitutes a classic is up for debate. There seem to be competing factors which prevent a clear, age-related categorisation.

The problem with age

There are a few problems with an exclusively age-based definition. Think of it this way: would you put more value on a VW Polo from the 1970s than you would for, say, a 1989 Porsche 911 Carrera?



With this in mind, there are different criteria to consider when deeming a car to be a classic and when determining its value. You need to take the following into consideration to varying degrees, depending on the individual car:

- Age - while we have discussed the pitfalls of defining a car by age alone, we all agree that, with a few notable exceptions, a brand-new car is probably not going to be a classic immediately.
- Aesthetic appeal - there must be beauty in its design and engineering.
- Rarity - a classic with limited production numbers will be more valuable.
- Condition - a car in original condition, even if it displays some tell-tale signs of wear and tear, will command a higher price tag than a fully-restored car. It lends an air of authenticity.
- Provenance - does it have a race history? Was it once owned by a celebrity? Has the model become iconic because of its use on screen? Think Sean Connery's James Bond and the Aston Martin DB5.
- Price - if the original, first-release price of the car was high, this translates to a high price now. If it was a thing to be coveted, then it will be now.
- Mileage - as with any car, a low mileage can command a higher price.

Why all the fuss?

Like any luxury item, a 'high end' classic car conveys a sense of status. However, classic cars, and especially the 'everyday' family models - also bring nostalgia: The vehicle might remind you of childhood films, or fond memories of a dear-departed loved one. It could also be an investment. Unlike modern cars, value increases - rather than depreciates - with time.

Whatever your reason for owning a classic car, for most owners it's unlikely it'll be used as a main mode of transport. For everyday use, people generally choose to have a modern car. But as modern cars aren't really an investment, and do lose value as soon as you drive it off the forecourt, more and more people are choosing a leasing deal like those offered at [Sensible Cars Leasing](#). This kind of option can take the stress out of car ownership and reduces the risk of costly repair bills.



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Of course, with occasional exceptions most owners don't usually want to take their classic car to work or use it for the weekly shop. They prefer not to risk damage to their pride and joy, preferring to save it for weekend outings and summer picnics, and letting it be the head-turner it was meant to be!

