

Senegalese License Plate Detection System

Manual Parsing and Regex Approaches

Group 11: Alliance, Maryam, Olusola, Jean

AIMS Rwanda

October 8, 2025

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Motivation

- Extract structured information (license plates) from plain text.
- Useful for logs, reports, monitoring, and preprocessing.
- Focus: Senegalese vehicle plate formats only.
- Two complementary methods: manual parser and regex pattern.

Accepted canonical patterns (letters A–Z, digits 0–9):

- XY-1234-T
- XY-1234-ZT

Separators may be hyphen or single space in input: XY 1234 T.

Rules Recap

- 2 starting letters
- Separator: - or space
- 4 digits
- Separator: - or space
- 1 or 2 trailing letters
- Not embedded inside longer alphanumeric strings
- Case-insensitive input; uppercase normalized output

Core Objectives

- Detect all valid plates in arbitrary text.
- Print normalized unique results in order.
- Report when none are found.

Extended Objectives

- Allow punctuation around plates.
- Interactive menu (manual testing).
- Provide alternative regex method.

Manual Parsing Pseudocode

```
UPPER = text uppercased
plates = empty list
i = 0
while i < length - minimal_length:
    if next 2 chars not letters: i++ ; continue
    if next sep not '-' or ' ': i++ ; continue
    if next 4 chars not digits: i++ ; continue
    if next sep not '-' or ' ': i++ ; continue
    read 1 or 2 letters as end_part
    if none: i++ ; continue
    check boundary before and after
    if ok:
        plate = canonical form with hyphens
        store if new
        i = end of match
    else:
        i++
if plates empty: report none else print list
```


Boundary Handling

- Ensure no letter/digit directly touches start or end of detected pattern.
- Prevents false matches inside longer tokens (e.g. AAXY-1234-T).
- Accepts punctuation (comma, period) near plates.

Regex Pattern

Core pattern (case-insensitive):

Pattern

```
(?i)(?<![A-Z0-9])([A-Z]{2})[- ](\d{4})[- ]([A-Z]{1,2})(?![A-Z0-9])
```

Pattern Components

- `(?i)` Case-insensitive matching
- `(?<![A-Z0-9])` Left boundary (no letter/digit before)
- `([A-Z]{2})` Two letters
- `[-]` Separator (hyphen or space)
- `(\d{4})` Four digits
- `([A-Z]{1,2})` One or two letters
- `(?![A-Z0-9])` Right boundary (no letter/digit after)
- Lookbehind / lookahead enforce clean boundaries.
- Captures letter block, digits, ending letters.
- Short, expressive, fast.

Manual vs Regex

Manual

- Stepwise logic
- Easy to tweak mid-steps
- Verbose
- Didactic

Regex

- Compact expression
- Faster to write
- Dense syntax
- Concise

Mixed sample paragraph included:

- Valid plates with hyphens and spaces.
- Single-letter and two-letter endings.
- Mixed casing.
- Near-miss invalid patterns.

Observed Outcomes

- All expected valid plates detected.
- No false positives in sample.
- Output normalized consistently.
- Order preserved; duplicates removed.

Conclusion

- Two clear methods implemented: manual parser and regex.
- Both meet detection, normalization, and uniqueness goals.
- Manual path aids learning; regex path aids brevity.
- Solid base for future extensions (fuzzy logic, more formats).

Key Takeaways

- Keep patterns explicit when teaching.
- Normalize early for consistency.
- Enforce boundaries to avoid false positives.
- Provide alternative implementations for flexibility.

Thank You!

Questions / Feedback?