

Basics of car maintenance: 8 tips to follow.



We rely on cars a lot in our day-to-day lives and sometimes we put them through a lot... hot summer days, icy winter conditions, kicked-up rocks, potholes and more. Because your car may be one of your biggest expenses, knowing the basics of car maintenance can help you save on car costs. Even the basics, like changing your oil, checking your tire pressure and getting scheduled inspections, will help your car run smoother down the road.

Keep your car a well-oiled machine by following these eight maintenance tips:

1. **Check the oil.** One of the most important things you can do for your car is to make sure the engine has the right type and amount of engine oil. Check your owner's manual for recommendations. Routine oil and filter changes can remove particles and sludge and keep your engine in peak condition. The frequency of oil changes varies by vehicle, but a general recommendation is every 3,000-7,500 miles. You can check the oil level between oil changes using the dipstick - make sure your car is turned off before doing so. See other tips for safely checking your oil, too.
2. **Test the battery.** Car batteries last an average of two to five years. You can promote longer battery life by testing the output voltage level with a car battery tester or multimeter. The battery voltage reading will show how "charged" the battery is. Consult your owner's manual or mechanic if the battery test indicates it's not at an optimal level.
3. **Top off fluids.** From lubricating to cooling, your car's fluids have important jobs to do. Refill fluids at the start of summer to prevent overheating, and check the levels again at the end of fall.
4. **Run the heater and AC.** There's nothing worse than turning on the air conditioning for that

first hot day, only to have more hot air blown your way. Malfunctioning climate control could mean larger issues like a leak in the system. Keep your car comfortable and your heater/AC running smoothly by testing it periodically.

5. **Check the tire pressure.** As the temperature rises and falls throughout the year, your tire pressure can fluctuate. Improperly inflated tires can affect a car's handling, lower your gas mileage, increase wear and even lead to a blown tire. Check the recommended psi on the sticker commonly found inside the driver's door. If there's no sticker adhered to the driver's door or side, check your owner's manual. Adjust tire pressure accordingly. While you're at it, check your tire tread and look for other wear or damage.
6. **Inspect the brakes.** The best way to care for car brakes is by sticking to the suggested maintenance schedule from your car's manual. Following a routine car maintenance schedule can prevent catastrophic brake failure and expensive repairs.
7. **Repair scratches and rust.** Scratches can lead to peeling paint, peeling paint can lead to rust and rust can lead to structural damage on a vehicle. Improve your car's appearance and longevity by fixing scratches and rust when they appear.
8. **Keep an emergency kit.** Be prepared at any point by storing a car emergency kit with extra fluids, cables, tools, a spare tire and more in your trunk.

Along with following the basics of car maintenance, protect your vehicle with an auto insurance policy. Talk to an agent about driving off with one today.