

vehicle
Maintenance
– make safety your habit



inside we cover...

Tips on **maintaining your vehicle** including fuel, lights, oil, water, electrics and rubber



Do you trust your car? Make Safety your habit and

Think FLOWER

Develop good habits – routine, regular, automatic checks will reduce the risks.

Fuel

Lights

Oil

Water

Electrics

Rubber

fuel

Not just enough for the journey next day, keep it high enough so you have a reserve for traffic delays, especially in winter conditions (the heater stops with the engine!) In remote areas you cannot assume the petrol station will be open nor have stocks of fuel – play safe!

light

Turn them on and walk all round. Check brakelights against a garage door or wall at dusk. Don't forget main beam, indicators, fog lights, sidelights.

oil

With the car standing on level ground, engine cold and having been standing, remove the dipstick - the level should be between the two marks. Overfilling or under-filling risks engine damage. Two metal surfaces rubbing together causes heat and wear - unless oil cools and lubricates; some engines can use as much as 1 litre of oil per 1000miles or more, especially in the early stages of bedding in, and hard conditions (hot weather, towing, high speed) can make it much worse - check more often if in doubt.

New cars need frequent careful monitoring until you are sure of what is 'normal'. Most cars will need about 1 litre of oil to bring the level from the lower mark to the upper mark - but check the handbook for your particular car to be certain.

water

Keep the screenwash reservoir full, use plenty of additive in winter - before it freezes up (it's a good idea to carry a small bottle of additive concentrate with you for emergency use). The coolant reservoir under the bonnet is usually transparent so that you can see the level without the need for removing the cap - the system is pressurized when hot.

Coolant level should be between minimum and maximum, get to know what is normal on your car so you can see a change - frequent top-ups needs investigation by a garage. When you are looking inside the engine compartment for these checks - get to look around and know what looks normal. Signs of oil or water leaks will warn of impending problems - as will metal dust or serious discolouration.



Did you know?

A recent survey of tyre pressure levels of **8700** cars has shown that **44%** of cars had at least **one tyre** at a low-pressure level

electrics

Is your battery good? (Sluggish starting in cold weather spells trouble; batteries lose efficiency in winter but get worse with age). If there is a hint of trouble, get it checked professionally before you get stranded. Other electrical items to monitor include windscreen wipers (worn wiper blades cannot clear the screen so well, replace them as soon as signs of wear are apparent), rear window heater, electric windows, horn, heater fan – defects will only get worse if neglected. Notice the warning lights when you start up – do they all go out as they should do? Seek advice if they do not do so.

rubber

- **Check the pressures shown in the handbook for your particular model, and use a good quality tyre gauge to assess pressures.** With a garage airline, some are inaccurate, so if you need to use one, always check all the tyres that day – they may be a little out but the error will be consistent all round the car so handling should be stable. Don't forget the spare tyre! It is no use when flat if you get a puncture.
- **While looking at the tyres, look for any sidewall damage** (deep cuts or gouges, a common cause of sudden air loss or deflation). If in doubt, seek professional advice.

- **Check also the tread depth. Car tyres must have 1.6mm of tread depth, across the central 3/4 of the width of the tyre, all around the tyre** – nearly all tyres have a 'treadwear indicator' which is a ridge of rubber set at 1.6mm, in the base of the main grooves. When the surrounding tread wears down to this level, the tyre must be replaced. New tyres often have around 8mm of tread, so even if the tread is just above the legal minimum, whilst it is legal to use the vehicle, in very heavy rain at high speed the tyre may not be able to effectively clear water from the road surface, resulting in loss of control.
- **If the wear pattern is not even across the tyre, then it could also signify faults with steering or suspension, and needs professional checking.** Whilst on the subject of tyres, on a car that does very little mileage, or a trailer or caravan that is seldom used, look particularly at the state of the rubber – natural age-hardening of the rubber may make the tyre dangerous long before the tread wears down to legal limits.

If in any doubt about any of these points - seek professional advice. Your safety is too important to neglect!

