

Getting your mower out of the garage: nine tune-up tips

Good maintenance in the spring will ensure your mower runs strong, help you operate safely, and protect your investment in your outdoor power equipment. The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute offers nine tips to help you get your mower tuned up. And if you don't want to handle the chore yourself — Sisters Rental offers a complete small-engine maintenance and repair service right here in Sisters.

- Work in a well-ventilated area. Work outdoors or in an area with good ventilation that is away from sparks and flame.
- Remove the spark plug. If you did not remove the spark plug when you put away your mower in the fall, you should take it out now. Install a new one when you finish tuning up your mower.
- Start the season with a clean air filter. Clean the air filter if your mower has the foam type, or replace the filter if you have a paper one.
- Change the oil. Remove the oil drain plug and let the dirty oil run out into a container. When it has completely drained, replace the plug and refill the crankcase. Use the type and quantity of oil recommended in your owner's manual.
- Lubricate any other moving

parts. Oil the wheel bearings and other moving parts, following the instructions in your owner's manual. Wipe off excess oil.

- Drain your gas tank. Most fuels today contain ethanol, which can phase separate into alcohol and water and cause damage to your mower's engine. If you did not empty your gas tank in the fall, drain it now. Follow safe handling procedures and dispose of old fuel properly.
- Protect your power by adding the right fuel. Always use E10 or less fuel. It is illegal to use any fuel with more than 10 percent ethanol in any outdoor power equipment, including your lawn mower. For more information about safe fueling, go to www.LookBeforeYouPump.com.
- Sharpen your mower's blade. A dull mower blade can shred the tips of your grass. Always remove the blade from the mower for sharpening. If the blade has large nicks in the cutting edge from hitting debris, it should be replaced.
- Clean your mower. Use a rag or brush to get grass clippings, leaves, and other debris off the deck and out of crevices. After you clean it, you may want to wax the deck. The wax will keep grass and dirt from sticking to it.

Keep your trimmer running well with a tune-up

The gas-powered string trimmer, also known as a weed whacker by many people, is a common yard and garden tool. Because they are less complicated than a lawn mower, many people do not know that string trimmers can benefit from a tune-up. The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute shares seven tips to help you tune up your string trimmer for spring and summer use.

Clean and visually inspect your equipment. Wipe it down with a rag or cloth and remove any dirt or debris. Look for loose screws, missing parts, or signs of damage.

Remove and inspect the spark plug. If the electrode looks worn replace the spark plug. Whether you install a brand-new spark plug or plan to use the old one, use a spark plug gapping tool to set the proper gap. Information on this should be found in your owner's manual.

Inspect and replace the line. Pull the trimmer line spool out and remove any leftover line from last season. The line can get brittle over time. Rewind with new line and reinstall the head.

Examine the air filter. Remove the cover and the air filter. Inspect the air filter carefully not only to see if it needs to be cleaned, but also to make sure it does not have any holes in it.

Holes will let dirt enter the engine, causing damage.

Check the controls. Start with the on/off switch. It should click on and off. Pull the starter rope all the way out and check for cuts, nicks, and frayed spots. Replace it if you see any signs of damage. Test the throttle for smooth operation and check the choke and primer bulb.

Drain any old fuel. If you did not empty your trimmer's fuel tank in the fall, drain your tank now. Most fuels today contain ethanol which can phase separate into alcohol and water and cause damage to your mower's engine. Follow safe handling procedures and dispose of old fuel properly.

Protect your power by using the right fuel. Always use E10 or less fuel. It is illegal to use any fuel with more than 10 percent ethanol in any outdoor power equipment, including your string trimmer. Higher ethanol blended fuels may damage or destroy outdoor power equipment. For more information about safe fueling, go to www.LookBeforeYouPump.com.

By following these tips before you start using your string trimmer this spring, you will protect your investment. For more information about the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, go to www.opei.org.



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