

fall CAR CARE

Fall is an essential time to prepare your vehicle for the upcoming cold winter months. Whether you are preparing to store your vehicle or prep it for winter, here's a checklist to follow from CarCare.org.

The Car Care Council, a non-profit organization dedicated to educating motorists about the importance of regular vehicle care, shares a fall car care checklist to help drivers prepare their vehicles for the winter months.

Check all fluids, including engine oil, power steering, brake and transmission fluid. Antifreeze and windshield washer fluid levels should all be checked before winter months. These levels should be checked every time you change your engine oil.

Check hoses and belts to make sure they are not cracked or have any damage to them. Car Care recommends changing any lightly damaged hoses as cold months can create more damage. Damaged hoses can

create major problems for your engine if not taken care of properly.

Your battery should be checked and replaced if necessary. Make sure all connections to your battery are clean and not damaged. Batteries last up to three years and should be changed after exceeding that time. Cold weather can create starting issues with older batteries.

Having a local auto-care technician check the brake system annually will keep you from having any breakdowns during the winter months and save you trips to the mechanic.

Check your engine to make sure your vehicle is performing well and has the best balance of power, fuel economy and low levels of emissions.

Vehicle lighting should be checked during the fall season, as it gets dark earlier during the fall and winter months. Take your vehicle to the mechanic if you are

experiencing any interior or exterior lighting problems.

Check for damage on your wipers, and replace wipers if you see any tears or missing parts. You can purchase wipers at any of your local auto parts centers. Most parts centers will even install purchased wipers free of charge.

Maintenance light

An engine maintenance light is never a fun sight to see when starting your vehicle. A number of codes and alerts can trigger your engine light to turn on. Take the time during the fall season to troubleshoot the engine maintenance light. You want to avoid any kind of breakdown or damage to your vehicle during the winter months.

Take your vehicle to your local dealership or mechanic to troubleshoot and address the reason for the engine maintenance light.

Don't void the warranty



Depending on the manufacturer of your new vehicle, it should carry a guarantee for a few years or the lifetime of specific components.

Unfortunately, warranties can be easily voided, even unintentionally. While you're at the dealership, ask for a thorough outline regarding what's covered and what may disqualify the protection plan.

If you are buying a car and planning to soup it up with modifications to enhance the horsepower or performance, it can sometimes be a dealbreaker. To maintain the full coverage of what the automaker covers, play it safe and ask a customer service representative if this type of tinkering is allowed. Routine modifications are OK, but major work might be problematic.

Check out three other easy ways to void a warranty, as suggested by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Misuse of the vehicle

Many passenger vehicles are just that, intended for daily driving on American roadways. If the damage is experienced while off-roading or drag racing, the manufacturer often has the right to disqualify the car for coverage. If you read the warranty guidelines, it should list its terms and what is considered normal operation.

Neglecting maintenance

One of the most significant reasons a warranty department will turn down a claim is due to a lack of proof of maintenance.

For coverage to remain intact, you must follow the manufacturer's recommendations for service intervals like oil changes, tire rotations and transmission services. Receiving services at the dealership where the vehicle was purchased makes it easy to track, as they will keep a record.

If you choose to perform the maintenance yourself, you must save all receipts and ensure the dates are marked.

Another way to ruin a warranty is by using unapproved fluids. Engines and other important components require specific viscosities of oil, transmission lubrication and antifreeze. Mixing the chemicals or using the wrong type can cause severe damage to a vehicle while leaving it unprotected by warranty.

Tampering with the odometer

Attempting to change the mileage of your vehicle is a serious offense. While it will automatically void a covered vehicle's coverage, it also can land you in serious trouble.

According to the United States Department of Justice, altering the mileage reading on a motor vehicle is a felony. Make sure you trust the mechanic performing the repairs.



Remain loyal to a dealership

The asking price for new vehicles isn't always what a dealership expects to obtain after the sale.

In most cases, they expect a customer to negotiate on both the car's cost and the value of their trade in. If you have a connection in the industry, you may even be qualified for a significant discount on purchases and services.

Have you seen the commercials or newspaper advertisements from dealers that offer employee pricing for specific vehicles? The sales pitch is made to entice consumers into getting a once-in-a-lifetime deal on a new purchase.

However, the dealership may have access to money-saving rebates, year-long, under specific circumstances.

Loyalty creates buying power

A dealership relies on each of its departments to remain profitable, not just selling new cars. Support its operations and the employees who keep your vehicles running by purchasing from the parts department, bringing the vehicle in for service and buying a professional detail.

As you become a regular customer, a representative may introduce you to loyalty programs like pre-paid services. Essentially when

you purchase a vehicle, you can add a small fee to the monthly payment and avoid paying out-of-pocket for things like oil changes, inspections and tire rotations.

Even if you're not in the market to make a purchase, it's good to familiarize yourself with a dealership where you will ultimately buy a new car. Expressing your loyalty for service and an interest in eventually investing can set you up for great pricing and a comfortable buying environment.

Unprecedented support

The dealership sometimes gets a bad name because of the costs for parts and services. However, genuine components are higher than aftermarket because the manufacturer chose them for optimal performance. Especially with the technology found on modern vehicles, some repairs aren't possible at an independent auto shop.

One reason the costs for labor at a dealership may be higher is the intense training provided for their technicians.

Addressing intricate tech features requires classes, hands-on instruction and sometimes access to a manufacturer's engineer. The next time you balk at a quote for service at a dealership, remember that part of the cost ensures there are mechanics capable of making those repairs.

Remaining loyal can place you in a category where you're eligible for significant discounts.