

# FALL CAR CARE

## Standard vehicle maintenance intervals to follow

No two automobiles are the same. So it makes sense that vehicles have different maintenance guidelines. Such guidelines, which include recommendations regarding how frequently oil should be changed and how often tires should be rotated, are typically included in vehicle owner's manuals. Drivers are urged to familiarize themselves with these guidelines, which can protect vehicles as well as the people inside them.

According to CarGurus, a free internet-based automotive resource, many manufacturers adhere to the 30-60-90 schedule. That schedule recommends everything from inspections to part replacements when vehicles reach 30,000, 60,000 and 90,000 miles. These recommendations are meant to serve as guidelines, and drivers should know that certain factors can affect how often routine maintenance should occur and when parts must be replaced.

For example, harsh driving conditions can lead to excessive wear and tear that causes parts to erode long before owner's manuals suggest they should. As a result, drivers should always speak with their mechanics during service appointments to determine if their vehicles are aging gracefully or if they need a little extra TLC.

Drivers should always read



their manuals for recommended service intervals. The following are some general maintenance guidelines, courtesy of CarGurus, that drivers can keep in mind as the miles pile up on their vehicles' odometers.

- **Oil and oil filter:** Many new cars now run on synthetic oil, which tends to last between 5,000 and 10,000 miles. Older vehicles using traditional oil may need to adhere to the once-standard oil change interval of 3,000 miles. Mechanics will typically replace oil filters with the same frequency as they replace oil.

- **Air filter:** Air filters generally need to be replaced every 15,000 to 30,000 miles.

However, CarGurus notes that drivers who park in dusty environments should err on the side of caution and have their air filters replaced every 15,000 miles.

- **Fuel filter:** Clogged fuel filters can affect engine performance and even prevent engines from running. Fuel filters may need to be changed at 30,000-mile intervals.

- **Battery:** A typical car battery tends to last around four or five years.

- **Brake pads:** Worn out brake pads will make a screeching sound. Brake pads should last around 50,000 miles, though they should be inspected at regular intervals regardless of mileage.

- **Brake rotors:** Brake rotors can be resurfaced or replaced, and this should be done around 60,000 miles. Resurfacing can only be done once and is less expensive than a full replacement.

- **Hoses:** Hoses crack over time, but generally do not need to be replaced until they reach the 90,000-mile mark. However, hoses should be inspected routinely, as busted hoses can cause very significant damage.

Recommended maintenance intervals are only intended to serve as guidelines. If drivers notice any changes in vehicle performance, they should consult a mechanic immediately, regardless of how many miles are on their cars or trucks.

## How to drive safe in inclement weather

Impaired visibility can be a safety hazard while driving. Everything from sun glare to hail can affect a driver's ability to see the road and navigate it effectively. Before drivers get behind the wheel, they should make note of their local forecast and make a plan for what to do if rain, snow or other conditions make it challenging to drive.

The International Association of Traffic and Safety Sciences indicates that, based on an examination of crash test data, the "likelihood of a crash increases during periods of low visibility, despite the tendency for less traffic and for lower speeds to prevail during these times."

Drivers can take several steps to improve their visibility when driving in poor weather conditions.

- **Inspect and change windshield wiper blades.** Wipers are instrumental in clearing precipitation away from the windshield. If they

don't function properly, they can't do their jobs. Drivers should replace their wipers at the first indication that they are no longer effective. In some conditions, wipers can freeze or stick. Pull over and clean the wipers manually.

- **Clear obstructions.** Always make sure the windshield is clear before driving. This can include removing ice and snow in the winter and cleaning off mud or bug splatter in the spring and summer. Use the front and rear defrost if condensation fogs up windows.

- **Slow down.** Foul weather can reduce drivers' ability to see far into the distance. Always drive slower in inclement weather in order to improve reaction time.

- **Top off fluids.** Always keep the windshield washer reservoir full and keep extra fluid in the trunk. In addition, look for a fluid that does not freeze in very cold

temperatures.

- **Learn how to drive in fog.** Each year, more than 38,700 vehicle crashes occur in fog, states the Federal Highway Administration. Slow down, stay focused and use regular headlights (not high beams) when driving in fog.

- **Go out only if necessary.** In snowy or icy conditions, drive only if it's absolutely necessary, as snow and ice can impair visibility and make roads slick, says AAA.

- **Avoid driving at dusk and dawn.** The human eye can have trouble adjusting to rapidly changing light and darkness conditions, which are common at dusk and dawn. If possible, make trips during the heart of the day, especially if poor lighting conditions typically make it difficult for them to drive.

Drivers can take steps to improve visibility when inclement weather makes roadways hard to navigate.

## Pack a car emergency kit

It is always wise to plan for the worst and hope for the best. These key items should always be included in a car emergency kit:

- durable bags or crates to store supplies
- complete first aid kit
- small fire extinguisher
- flashlights and extra batteries
- road flares or caution reflectors
- jumper cables
- rain ponchos
- plastic tarp
- bottled water
- nonperishable foods
- wrench and pliers
- local maps
- rags
- duct tape
- multipurpose tool
- ice scraper
- automotive fluids
- blankets/warm clothing
- cat litter for slick roads
- tire-changing equipment
- spare tire
- refillable gas canister
- cash for gas
- phone charger cable

Being prepared can make a difference when vehicles are sidelined.



## 3 ways to cut the costs of owning a vehicle

When buying a new vehicle, many consumers are fixated on sticker prices. And that's understandable, as the automotive resource Kelley Blue Book noted that, in March 2018, the average transaction price for light vehicles purchased in the United States was more than \$35,000.

But as any veteran vehicle owner knows, the costs of owning a car or truck go beyond sticker price. Maintenance, insurance and fuel are some of the additional expenses that are part of owning a vehicle. And while it can be hard to get dealers to lower a sticker price, drivers can take other steps to reduce the cost of owning a vehicle.

1. **Make a long-term commitment.** Many drivers finance their auto purchases with loans from the bank. When loans reach maturity, or if drivers pay the loans off early, only then are they free from monthly payments. But over the years many drivers have equated the maturity dates on their auto loans with a time to buy a new car, essentially starting the process all over again. By resolving to keep their cars once their loans are paid off, drivers are making a long-term commitment to their vehicles and saving some money along the way. Even keeping a car that required a \$400 monthly loan payment for one year after paying the loan off can save drivers nearly \$5,000 in loan payments, and even more if drivers reduce their insurance coverage once the vehicle is officially theirs.

2. **Downsize your vehicle.** Parents cart kids around in minivans or SUVs that have the capacity to hold sports gear, musical instruments, etc. But if the kids are out of the house or behind the wheels of their own car, consider downsizing to a small vehicle. Small vehicles are typically less expensive to purchase, and they won't cost as much to insure or fill up at the gas station.

3. **Skip the bells and whistles.** Today's drivers may want their cars to be mobile offices and entertainment centers outfitted with all the latest gadgets. Though such accessories might be nice, they aren't necessary to get you from point A to point B. When buying a new car, buy the base model or one step up from the base model, which could save you thousands of dollars right off the bat.

Driving is a necessity that does not come cheap. But there are many ways for motorists to reduce the costs of vehicle ownership.

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