

■ IN A SENSE, your car is like the human body. It can be abused for a long time—overworked, neglected—and seemingly it will keep working, even though less effectively than it might. But a day of reckoning will come for a shabbily treated automobile, just as it will for a human being who disdains the ordinary rules of healthful living.

You can minimize your car-care problems by ordinary horse sense and an awareness that every mile you drive brings the need of some kind of maintenance closer. This seven-point check list will make your motoring more trouble-free:

1. Keep Your Engine Tuned

Signs of trouble ahead include excessive intervals before the motor starts in the morning, stalling at stop lights, sudden reduction in mileage per gallon, rough idling, sluggish pickup.

Those slow morning starts often occur in fall; the engine has been tuned for summer driving, and more gas flow is needed for cold weather—you'll be well advised to have the carburetor adjusted in time.

Worn spark plugs (your dealer will tell you how often they need changing) often misfire and waste fuel. Fall is a good time to change, before rigorous winter requirements arise. Points may need replacement; timing adjustment will often result in happier driving. Also, ask the mechanic to check the fan belt for proper tension.

2. Use the Right Fuel

This is a pocketbook saver. Using better-grade fuel than your engine needs merely improves the turnover of your bankroll. In general, a fuel that drives your car without creating engine knock is good enough for steady use, although some fuels have additives which help certain phases of car performance.

3. Keep Your Car Clean

You'll be well advised to start off with an undercoating—at the time you get your new car, or after an older one has been thoroughly steam-cleaned. It deadens rattles and delays under-car corrosion.

Keep your car washed. Water

7 ways to enjoy trouble-free driving

There will be no breakdown and bills tomorrow if you give your car a little care today

By STANLEY H. BRAMS

and dirt carry corrosive materials from the roadway. Make a habit of touching up your car finish regularly. Little bits of gravel or stones can crack enamel or lacquer loose from its hold on the body surface, starting a rust patch.

The same goes for bright work. Neglected, it will get dingy, may even corrode; in any case, it won't help the price you'll get when you eventually sell the car. Your serviceman will tell you the best treatment—it varies, depending on the kind of bright work on your car.

4. Keep It Greased

Most 1962s have semipermanent grease systems and don't require lubing for 30,000 miles or so. But others should be lubricated regularly, at least every 2,000 miles to

avoid squeaks and rattles and the danger of failure caused by surfaces rubbing against each other instead of on a thin coating of lubricant. Under the heading of greasing, too, remember that wheel bearings need repacking regularly.

5. Check Your Tires

To begin with, they should be rotated periodically—front to rear, one side to the other, with the spare worked into the shift pattern. Look regularly at your tires for cuts and bruises—have them fixed. Pry out bits of embedded glass and metal and have the cut vulcanized.

When the time comes to buy new tires, if you drive a smaller car you might find savings in the new two-ply casings introduced this fall on the compacts. They're just as safe as the four-ply tires, say the manufacturers, and run cooler—hence last longer.

Have your wheels balanced—at least your front wheels. You'll eliminate annoying vibration that can sometimes become downright dangerous.

6. Watch Your Battery

New, improved batteries rarely need refilling, but whether your car has a fine new one or an old one, it pays to watch the water level in the cells. A dry battery performs badly only for a short time—then it's completely ruined.

Scrape off those white deposits of acid on the case and terminals. They rob you of power—you pay for it in excessive gas use, shortened battery life, and the continuing danger of electrical-system failure.

7. Clean Your Cooling System

Before you install any antifreeze in your cooling system, your serviceman should check all hoses and fittings and flush out the system, if possible with a high-pressure reverse flow of water.

One warning we all need: install antifreeze before that first sudden swoop of icy weather to avoid frustrating steamups and possible radiator damage.

This check list can be a lucky seven for you if you observe it. Being careless about it can, at best, be annoying—and, at worst, dangerous and expensive.