

Car maintenance tips

"Safety is a primary benefit of knowing how to look after your car, and a few basic car maintenance tips can keep someone safe, and help extend the life of your car," explains David Roache, managing director of dotsure.co.za.



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Complete car maintenance can be a detailed process. Here are seven tips that should help keep anyone out of the yellow lane.

1. Know how to change a tyre

A survey conducted by a British car reality show in 2018 reported that 75% of millennials did not know how to change a tyre, with further results showing that many of them wouldn't be able to handle even the basic car maintenance tasks.

"Being able to change a flat tyre can save you time and money, but more importantly, your life," advises Roache. Make sure that you always travel with a good quality spare tyre, a working jack, and a spanner to be able to get the job done. A reliable spare is necessary as this replacement tyre needs to be able to get you safely to a destination where you can have your flat tyre checked and hopefully repaired.

Before attempting to change your tyre, make sure that you have parked on level ground, the car is in gear, the handbrake is up, and the car is switched off. A handy tip is to slightly loosen the nuts on the wheel before lifting the car up with the jack, and only once lifted, continue to loosen the nuts completely.

2. Have your oil checked regularly

The oil in your car is what keeps the engine working smoothly; it lubricates the engine's internal parts and protects them from wear and tear. It also cleans the engine, stops dirt from building up, and prevents the engine from overheating.

Have your oil and tyres checked whenever you visit a filling station. To check the oil yourself, make sure that the car is turned off, and on level ground. It is advisable to let the car cool down before checking the oil to get an accurate reading. Open the bonnet and locate the oil dipstick. Pull the dipstick out, wipe it off with a clean cloth, put it back in again, and pull it out. This will indicate the oil level.

Most dipsticks will have an indicator – some have an ‘L’ and ‘H’ (low and high), others have two pins, and some have the words ‘max’ and ‘min.’ Should your car need oil, make sure you purchase the correct kind to fill it up or go to your local petrol station for them to assist you.

3. Have your insurer’s number on speed dial

Your phone should contain all emergency contact numbers, including your motor insurer. When choosing motor insurance, you ideally want to choose a partner that offers additional benefits.

4. Always carry an emergency kit in your car

A car emergency kit is a first aid kit for your car; it holds everything you may need to keep your car running and to help you out in a sticky situation. Your emergency kit should include jumping cables (which are only effective if you know how to use them), a torch, screwdrivers, pliers, duct tape (perfect for any quick fixes to get you to the nearest petrol station or garage) and an emergency warning triangle which must be placed behind the car if your car has broken down.

Be sure to include a blanket, a few bottles of water and perhaps some non-perishable food in the kit to sustain you if you need to wait for help. But most importantly, a charged power bank.

5. Keep up to date with all car maintenances

A sure-fire way to avoid unnecessary maintenance costs is to keep up to date with your car service schedule. Your car does need to be regularly fine-tuned and certain parts must be changed after a certain number of kilometres. By sticking to regular servicing, you will be getting ahead of any problems that may occur in the future and can catch you unawares.

6. Refill the windshield wiper fluid

Something as simple as refilling the windshield washer fluid is part of looking after your car – not being able to see through a dusty windscreen is hazardous when driving. Simply lift the bonnet of your car, locate the washer fluid reservoir (the translucent container with a windshield wiper and water symbol on the cap), and if it is low fill it up with windshield washer fluid. If you have rear windscreen wipers, there may be a second reservoir. Be sure to put the cap on tight when you are finished.

7. Refer to your manual

When in doubt, and to double-check yourself, refer to your car's manual. All the information you need to know about a problem with your car will be available to you in black and white. Be sure to keep your car manual in the glove compartment for easy access when in an emergency.

"These seven tips can make car maintenance a little easier, and who knows? Maybe, it will extend to another interest or hobby that will once again put women in pole position," says Roache.

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