

Winterizing Your Car

Ready for winter? Get your car ready, too. Here's what you need to know for tire maintenance and a look under the hood. Have your kids prepare a winter safety kit, and remind your teen of winter driving tips.

► Tire Maintenance

Rain, snow and ice reduce tire traction and compromise your control. What's the solution?



1. A tire option you may wish to consider when you purchase your next set of tires

- High performance winter tires were originally designed to meet strict government regulations for driving on high-speed highways in Europe. They feature large directional and/or asymmetric treads to enhance handling and steering, resist hydroplaning and help tires work through slush.

2. Check your tire pressure

Fall and early winter are the most critical times to check tire inflation pressures because the days are getting shorter and temperatures are getting colder.

Tip: For every 10-degree Fahrenheit change in temperature, your tire's inflation will change about one pound per square inch (psi) (up with higher temperatures and down with lower).

Tip: Check your tire pressure in the morning before you drive a few miles. If you park in an attached or heated garage, you will "lose" pressure when you leave its warmth.

3. Check your tire treads and sidewalls

Look for thin or uneven tread wear. Take a Lincoln-head penny and insert it Lincoln-head first into your tire tread at the most worn part of the tire. If you see the top of Lincoln's head, you may need new tires. Cut or damaged sidewalls are also weak areas that can collapse under severe conditions.

► Under the Hood



1. Check your battery

It takes a lot more power to start your car when it is cold outside. Check for clean and tight connections and proper fluid levels. Clean corrosion (a whitish powder) from battery terminals.

2. Check your cooling system

Your coolant system keeps your car warm. Check the level, acidity and concentration of radiator fluids at least every 3,000 miles.

Tip: A mixture of 50% anti-freeze and 50% water will protect down to -40 degrees Fahrenheit.

3. Clean your fuel system

Add a de-icer to your fuel to keep moisture in the fuel system from freezing.

4. Change your oil and oil filter

Check your owner's manual for the grade of oil recommended for winter. In most cases, 10w30 oil works year-round.

5. Inspect and replace

Inspect your air filter, rubber hoses and drive belts and replace as necessary. Also check your fluid levels (transmission, brake, differential, power steering and window washer fluid).

► Winter Safety Kit



Prepare a winter safety kit to keep in your car at all times. Be sure to include:

1. Winter necessities such as an ice scraper; tire chains; extra washer fluid; boots and gloves; and sand, kitty litter or old house shingles for traction.

2. Emergency supplies such as extra clothing and blankets, flashlight with spare batteries, energy bars or dried snacks, drinking water, a battery-powered radio with spare batteries, a first aid kit, booster cables, safety flares, a small shovel, and a jug of water and funnel for radiator refills.

3. Tools and "fix-it" supplies such as a screwdriver, pliers, rubber hammer, wrench, a can of penetrating oil, an old scarf and belt for emergency hose repairs, and a small throw rug and old shower curtain (for kneeling next to your car or getting under it).

► Winter Driving Tips

No matter how safe your car is, winter driving requires extra attention. Brake gently, accelerate gently and steer gently. Remember these tips, too:



Tip: As every driver's education teacher repeats, steer **into** a skid.

Tip: If you get stuck in the snow, throw kitty litter, old newspapers or dirt in front of and behind the drive wheels.

Tip: In snowy conditions, drive in lower gears. Avoid using your overdrive feature.

Tip: Always keep your gas tank at least half full.