

## Basic Vehicle Maintenance

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The things you need to do to keep your car or truck in shape.

Life comes at you fast and it is easy to get overwhelmed with all the tasks of your daily life: pickup the groceries, the dry cleaning, the kids from soccer practice, etc. And what do you use to do all those things? Your vehicle. You may now realize the importance of having a properly maintained vehicle, so follow these simple steps to ensure you don't have any unexpected delays in your life.

1. Keep track of your mileage and change your oil & air filter on a regular basis. It is recommended that you change your oil every 3,000 if you are using regular oil and every 5,000 miles if you're using synthetic oil. Do be careful if you're following a 5,000 mile interval: synthetic oil is usually fine at that mileage, but the oil filter can deteriorate before then, starving your car of the precious lubricant. So make sure to buy a quality oil filter that is rated to last 5,000 miles. Air filters should be changed every 10,000-15,000 miles, but that is just an average. If you live in a particularly dusty or sandy area, the interval could be much shorter, so make sure to check it regularly and change it when necessary. If the air filter looks brown or black, a change is necessary. You can easily do this yourself in your garage and if you have a garage floor mat, cleanup will be easy.

2. Pay attention to your brakes, they could save your life one day. Brakes are something that last so long many people can forget to check them. It's relatively easy to check yourself, but if you aren't good with a wrench take your car to a proper mechanic. Things you want to pay attention to are: how far down does the pedal go before the car begins to stop. If it almost hits the floor, its time to have some brake work done. If the pedal goes almost down to the floor, it is usually one of three things: the brake fluid is dirty, the brake fluid has absorbed too much water and is no longer good for hydraulic purposes, or the pads are near the end of their life. It could be any combination of the three, but usually the brake fluid is the culprit of this problem. Brake fluid isn't hard to change and is much easier if you have a friend help you, cleanup can be a pain though. Brake fluid will strip paint right off your car or garage floor, so make sure you have a container to put it in like a jar or an empty jug of cranberry juice. A garage floor mat can also help protect your garage floor from getting stained or otherwise damaged from a brake fluid spill, so keep that in mind as well. If your brakes squeak when slowing the car, it's definitely time for a brake job because nobody likes squeaky brakes. The squeak can be one of two things: the anti-squeak grease has worn off, or the pads are worn so far that the wear-bars are hitting the rotors. If your brakes squeak only at certain times or at light brake pedal pressure, then it's probably the grease. If your brakes squeak all the time, it's probably the wear-bars hitting the rotors. The best thing to do is jack-up the car, take off a wheel, and check the pads at the caliper. The hard part here is you don't know which problem to prepare for, pads or grease. So you can buy both and return the pads if you don't use them. If the pads are worn and need replacement, you'll need the grease anyway. Just remember, if you aren't comfortable working on your brakes, have a mechanic do it because it's worth the extra money for peace of mind that your brakes will work when you need them.

3. Lastly, make sure to have all other regularly scheduled maintenance performed at the dealership or an independent shop. You can also do it yourself if you're an aspiring or aspired mechanic, just make sure you take your time to do everything right. Dealerships are usually best for this type of work, but can be quite expensive. Independent shops are good, but don't always check everything the dealership does and sometimes they don't use manufacturer approved fluids, something to consider if you still have a warranty. Examples of long-term maintenance work include: changing power steering fluid, transmission fluid, heater core fluid, coolant, and checking the CV joints. Consult your vehicles manual for a complete list of what maintenance work needs to be done at the various mileage intervals.

You can click on the following links for more information concerning the long-term health of your vehicle: [Brakes](#), [Auto Air Filter](#), and [Garage Floor Mats](#).

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