FREE PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

Car maintenance checklist

What to check before you drive, every month and on your maker's schedule. Tick each box as you go. Do each job at the time or the mileage shown, whichever comes first.

Drive With Care
Safety Behind the Wheel Foundation
drivewithcare.org

Vehicle: _____ Mileage today: _____ Date: _____

Before every drive

About 1 minute

- [ ] Tires look full, with no bulges, cuts or exposed cords
- [ ] Windows, lights, mirrors and cameras clear of snow, ice and dirt
- [ ] No fresh drips or puddles under the car
- [ ] Warning lights go out after startup
- [ ] Floor mat hooked in place, pedals clear, everyone buckled

Every month

Or 1,000 miles. About 10 minutes

- [ ] Tire pressure, checked cold, matches the door label (spare too)
- [ ] Tread: quarter test. Shop for tires at 4/32 inch
- [ ] Headlights, brake lights, turn signals, hazards and reverse lights
- [ ] Oil, coolant, brake fluid and washer fluid levels
- [ ] Battery cables tight, no white or green crust
- [ ] Washer spray works, windshield chips repaired

Every 3 months

Or 3,000 miles

- [ ] Wiper blades: no streaks, skipping or cracked rubber
- [ ] Belts and hoses: no cracks, glazing, bulges or soft spots
- [ ] Emergency kit stocked: jumper cables, flashlight, first aid, water, blanket

Every 6 months

Or 5,000 to 6,000 miles

- [ ] Oil and filter, or when the oil reminder says Shop or you
- [ ] Tire rotation and a quick brake check Shop
- [ ] Battery test Shop
- [ ] Exhaust check for leaks and new noises Shop
- [ ] Recall check at NHTSA.gov/recalls (when the clocks change)
- [ ] Seat belts pull out, retract, lock and buckle
- [ ] Wash, including underneath after road salt

Each season

Before winter, spring, before summer

- [ ] Before winter: battery test, coolant, winter washer fluid, tires or winter tires, winter kit
- [ ] When it turns cold: check tire pressure more often
- [ ] Spring: tires, wheels and alignment after pothole season
- [ ] Before summer trips: cooling system, battery, tires and spare, air conditioning, recalls

Every year

Or 12,000 to 15,000 miles

- [ ] Full brake inspection, measurements written down Shop
- [ ] Steering, suspension and alignment Shop
- [ ] Engine and cabin air filters
- [ ] New wiper blades
- [ ] Oil change at least once a year, even with low miles

Every 2 years

Or about 30,000 miles

- [ ] Brake fluid and transmission fluid, per your manual Shop
- [ ] Coolant and antifreeze Shop
- [ ] Ignition system and fuel filter Shop

Every 3 to 5 years

Or past about 60,000 miles

- [ ] Replace the battery (most last 3 to 5 years)
- [ ] New tires at 4/32 inch, or 6 to 10 years after the date code
- [ ] Timing belt, if your engine has one (often 60,000 to 90,000 miles) Shop

Electric vehicles

Changes to the lists

- [ ] No oil changes, belts or spark plugs
- [ ] Rotate tires about every 6,250 to 7,500 miles (heavy EVs wear tires faster)
- [ ] Yearly brake check, plus caliper cleaning where roads are salted
- [ ] Test the small 12 volt battery. The car may not start without it
- [ ] Cabin filter about every 2 years. Brake fluid every 4 to 5 years
- [ ] Charging cable and plug free of heat marks and cracks
- [ ] Never touch orange high voltage cables or parts

Stop driving now if

- A red brake, oil pressure or engine temperature light comes on
- The brake pedal sinks or feels soft, or one wheel smokes or smells
- A tire has a bulge or exposed cords
- You smell exhaust or fuel, or get a headache or dizziness while driving
- The check engine light flashes: slow down and get service right away

Shop marks jobs a qualified technician should usually do. Everything else most drivers can check with a tire gauge and a flashlight.

Typical intervals from AAA, NHTSA, the CDC and automaker schedules. **Your owner's manual comes first.** Short trips, extreme heat or cold, dust and towing call for the shorter schedule in your manual. General education, not mechanical advice. Free to print and share.

Interactive version and guides
drivewithcare.org/car-care-and-safety-checks

KEEP WITH YOUR REGISTRATION

Service log

Write down every service and repair. Good records help you spot problems early, back up warranty claims and add value when you sell.

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Year, make and model _____ VIN _____ License plate _____

Tire size _____ Tire pressure, front and rear (door label) _____ Oil type and amount _____

Battery installed (month and year) _____ Tires installed (month and year) _____ Shop name and phone _____

Date	Mileage	Work done	Shop or DIY	Cost	Next due (date or miles)

Recall checks NHTSA.gov/recalls, twice a year

_____ _____ _____ _____

Warning lights, noises or leaks noticed

_____

_____

Keep receipts with this log. Ask for a written estimate before work starts, and keep the old parts if you want proof a part was replaced. **Free to print and share.**

Checklist, guides and reminders
drivewithcare.org/car-care-and-safety-checks