

Automotive Maintenance You Should Never Put Off Doing

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Just about every person who has ever owned a car got a warning from their parents to keep up with the maintenance or they would have to deal with a break-down and a huge repair bill. Unfortunately, too many people simply assume that means making sure the oil gets changed every 3,000 miles, then wonder why their car broke down on them.

The truth is that auto maintenance is more than just changing oil; it's keeping up with a number of items on your vehicle including servicing worn out parts, testing various systems, and replacing a list of various fluids besides the oil. Regular maintenance can prolong the life of a vehicle, but it can also prevent serious damage to systems. Just as changing the oil prevents the engine from seizing, performing routine maintenance on brakes, the power steering system and the tires costs relatively little and can prevent major repairs to the transmission, brakes, and other systems.

Most importantly, regular maintenance helps to ensure that your vehicle operates safely. Performing the following maintenance items can help you to make sure that your car runs properly, doesn't break down, and performs at its peak.

Check Your Owner's Manual for Regular Automotive Maintenance

Of course, the first question that many people have is exactly what kind of regular maintenance should they perform on their car. Believe it or not, the best answer to this question is in your owner's manual. Each car has its' own unique maintenance schedule. For example, replacing the fluids might need to occur every three thousand, five thousand, or ten thousand miles. In the case of hybrid and electric cars, it's possible to be on a completely different maintenance schedule than what an experienced car owner is used to. The owner's manual will also include a recommended schedule for replacing and servicing every belt, brake pad, and tire on the vehicle.

It is important to realize that this schedule can be affected by extreme and unusual conditions. Events such as long trips, extreme weather conditions, and towing can affect a vehicle and require it to have parts or fluid replaced more often. Most owner's manuals include a list of conditions that may affect the performance of the vehicle.

Monitor and Replace Your Vehicle Fluids – Oil, Coolant, Power Steering, Brake Fluids

For most vehicles, the most frequent maintenance action will be replacing and checking fluids. For many vehicles, this needs to be done at least every 3,000 to 5,000 miles, fortunately, learning to check your own fluids is surprisingly easy. Most owner's manuals provide detailed instructions on how to check oil, coolant, washer, power steering, and even brake fluids. The storage wells for these fluids are usually clearly marked, and checking them generally requires opening the well and using a dipstick to check the level and consistency. Of course, your oil needs to be changed regularly. Ideally, learn to do this yourself, but at the very least have a mechanic take care of it regularly.

Change Your Cabin Air Filter and Engine Filter

The next most common maintenance items are filters. While these can be a little more difficult to access, swapping them out is relatively cheap and can greatly affect the performance of your vehicle since they affect the quality of the air being circulated through the engine.

Maintain Correct Tire Pressure

Finally, make sure to pay attention to your tires. Tire pressure can change frequently based on temperature, tread, and other conditions, so it makes sense to check your pressure and add air if necessary on a regular basis. If your tire pressure is too low, it can cause your gas mileage to dip significantly. Low pressure will also cause the tread on your tires to wear faster, forcing you to replace your tires more often. Pressure that is too high can affect how your vehicle handles and also can increase the likelihood of having a tire blowout, creating a potentially dangerous situation.

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