

Fifty-Nine Ways To Make Your Car Last Longer!

**A Special Report
Compliments Of...**

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According to current auto insurance statistics, the average U.S. car's useful life is 10 years or 100,000 miles. By following these 59 steps, you may be able to double your car's useful life, and spend less money on gas and repairs.

Every 2 weeks or 500 miles:

1. Check your engine oil, transmission fluid, and coolant.

Once a month or 1,000 miles:

2. Check tire pressure, with tire gauge.
3. Check transmission fluid.
4. Check brake fluid.
5. Wax your car (van or truck) to protect finish.
6. Check belts and hoses.

Every 3 months or 3,000 miles:

7. Change oil and oil filter
8. Lubricate chassis.
9. Check transmission fluid.
10. Check all drive belts (fan belts) for cracks.

Every 6 months or 6,000 miles:

11. Change oil and filter
12. Inspect suspension.
13. Rotate tires.

Every 12 months or 12,000 miles:

14. Flush radiator, replace anti-freeze, check air conditioning system.
15. Replace air filters.
16. Lubricate chassis.

Every 2 years or 24,000 miles:

17. Replace spark plugs (30,000 miles average suggested for unleaded gas) and PC valve.
18. Change automatic transmission fluid, filter and pan gasket.
19. Inspect brake linings.

Every 3 years or 30,000 miles:

20. Check and test ignition wires (replace if needed).
21. Test cooling system and heating hoses (replace if needed).
22. Check drive belts (replace if needed).
23. Replace fluid in differential and manual transmission.

Every 50,000 miles:

24. Check brake shoes (replace if needed)
25. If you have a major repair to do, it's wise to get at least 3 estimates, if possible, before you decide.
26. Read and follow your car owner's manual – it's your car's bible for making your car last longer.
27. Whether you're a man or woman, learn how to do some routine maintenance on your car yourself. Your local library has many books, videos, and magazines to teach you how to do basic automotive maintenance. Learn how to check your own oil, transmission fluid, tire pressure, coolant, and so on.
28. If you find a good mechanic whom you can trust, stick with him even if his prices are a bit higher – all things being equal. You'll always save time, money and aggravation in the long run.

29. Don't race your engine when you start it up. Accelerate slowly and smoothly when your engine is cold.
30. Avoid burning rubber – it places excessive wear on the transmission, rear end, not to mention your tires.
31. An international tire company estimated that 33% of all tires on the road are under-inflated (low air). Under-inflated tires wear out quicker and have a tendency to blow out easier.
32. A garaged car lasts longer. A carport is next best, and a car cover is a distant third.
33. Avoid jackrabbit starts and stops. Stop and accelerate gradually.
34. Avoid tailgating, tire squealing turns, flying over speed bumps, potholes and revving your engine.
35. When possible, avoid driving your car during rush hour stop and go traffic periods.
36. Keep front-end aligned, for longer tire life and better gas mileage.
37. Make sure you get promised repairs in writing including how much it will cost.
38. Avoid car dealers except to have highly-specialized repairs done that can't be done properly anywhere else.
39. It's hard to be overcharged when you get three estimates before you have the work done.
40. Caution: Cheapest is not always the best. Normally, the best mechanics with the best equipment and training cost more.
41. Often mechanics that charge extremely low prices have inferior or out-dated equipment, little to no formal training or are under-insured.
42. Complex electrical problems are so involved that serious electrical work should be done in an "Auto Electric" shop. They have the equipment, tool and training to do the job more efficiently than the average mechanic.
43. If your car has "Cruise Control" use it. Using cruise control will save you 5% to 10% of a gallon of gas on long trips.
44. Avoid constantly pressing and releasing the accelerator when driving. Doing so not only wastes fuel, but it also puts excessive wear on the drive train of your car.
45. Don't ride your brake pedal, this wears out your brake linings pre-maturely, and wastes fuel.

46. Driving with your windows all the way down at higher speeds, will waste 10% more gas than driving with them closed.
47. Research by a major car manufacturer has revealed that neglect of proper routine maintenance is the number one reason for the enormous increase in car repairs being required.
48. Tires purchased at department stores such as Sears, Montgomery Wards, K-Mart etc., can be an excellent value because many are made by leading tire manufacturers. For a list of what manufacturer makes which tires for what department store, write to: Tire Information Center, P.O. Box 677, Syosset, NY 11791.
49. When purchasing or changing tires, make sure you have them spin balanced.
50. Avoid cleaning your windshield with a dry rag or towel. Always dampen with water or some other cleaning liquid. Dry towels grind and scratch your windshield hindering your visibility.
51. Avoid turning on the car air-conditioning while running at highway speeds as this tends to put an immediate heavy load on your compressor and clutch. This could cause excessive wear and tear on these components. Instead turn your air conditioner on at car speeds below 25 to 30 m.p.h. This helps to preserve your expensive compressor.
52. Avoid running your car with the tank low on gas. Keeping a low tank of gas increases the chance of dirt, water (moisture), and rust forming in your fuel system. Keeping a full tank decreases the chance of dirt and other foreign matter forming in your fuel system.
53. Tires driven at 70 m.p.h. wear out almost twice as fast as cars that go 50 m.p.h.
54. A government study has confirmed, the top three causes of car breakdowns while on the road are: (a) running out of gas (b) tire troubles (c) cooling system problems (overheating)
55. Regular oil changes are the most important thing you can do to protect your engine and make it last longer.
56. If you have a manual transmission, downshift to slow your car down instead of using your brakes. This will save wear and tear on your braking system.
57. Each time you have your engine oil checked, have your transmission fluid checked also.
58. Protect your car's interior and make it last longer – park your car in the shade or place a windshield guard or cover in the windshield.

59. If you spill something inside your car, clean it up immediately before it dries. Delaying even 30 minutes can sometimes leave a permanent stain or spot. To better protect your car seats, get them treated with Scotchguard.

Like many people, if you know little or nothing about cars, or don't want to do your own maintenance work, then you probably need to take your car to a repair shop. If so, then here's...

How to Choose the Right Repair Shop

No matter what you drive – a sports car, family sedan, pick-up, or mini-van, or truck – when you go in for repairs or service, you want the job done right. Follow these suggestions and you'll be able to choose the right repair shop.

The key to choosing the right repair shop – whether it's a dealership, service station, independent garage, specialty shop, or a national franchise – is good communications between you and the shop. Every good repair shop knows the importance of communications in automotive repairs.

Do your homework before taking your vehicle in for repairs or service.

Read the owner's manual to learn about the vehicle's systems and components. And then follow the recommended service schedules. Keep a log of all repairs and service.

Since you drive your car more than anybody else, you probably know it better than anybody. You know how it feels and sounds when everything is right. So don't ignore its warning signals.

Use all of your senses to inspect your car regularly. Check for:

- Unusual sounds, odors, drips, leaks, smoke, warning lights, gauge readings
- **Changes in acceleration, engine performance, gas mileage, fluid levels**
- Worn tires, belts, hoses
- **Problems in handling, braking, steering, vibrations**

Note when the problem occurs. Is it constant or periodic? When the vehicle is cold or after the engine has warmed up? At all speeds? Only under acceleration? During braking? When shifting? When did the problem first start?

The more you know about a problem, the easier it'll be for a mechanic to figure out a solution.

Anyway, the best time to look for a repair shop is before you need one. Here are suggestions for...

- 1. Before your vehicle needs servicing**
2. When you're at the shop
- 3. After your vehicle has been serviced**

Before Your Vehicle Needs Servicing

- Avoid dropping your vehicle off at the nearest garage and hope for the best. That's not choosing a shop, that's merely gambling.
- Read your owner's manual to become familiar with your vehicle and follow the manufacturer's suggested service schedule.
- Start shopping for a repair facility before you need one; you can make better decisions when you are not rushed or in a panic.
- Ask friends and co-workers for their recommendations. Even in this high-tech era, old-fashioned word-of-mouth reputation is still valuable.
- Check with your local consumer organization regarding the reputation of the shop you're considering.
- If possible, arrange for alternate transportation in advance so you won't be forced to choose a facility solely based on the location.
- Once you choose a repair shop, start off with a minor job; if you are pleased, trust them with more complicated repairs later

When You're at the Shop

- Look for a neat, well-organized facility, with vehicles in the parking lot equal in value to your own and modern equipment in the service bays.
- Professionally run establishments will have a courteous, helpful staff. The service writer should be willing to answer all of your questions.
- Ask for the names of a few customers as reference, and call them (unless a friend has referred the shop to you).
- Ask if the shop regularly handles your vehicle make and model. Some facilities specialize in specific makes and models only.
- Ask if the shop usually does your type of repair, especially if you need major work.
- Look for signs of professionalism in the customer service area: civic and community service awards, membership in the Better Business Bureau, AAA-Approved Auto Repair status, customer service awards.
- Look for evidence of qualified technicians, such as trade school diplomas, certificates of advanced course work, and ASE certifications – a national standard of technician competence. This is very important because the backbone of any shop is the competence of the technicians.

- To work on a late model computer-controlled engines, make sure the shop you choose has the equipment to handle computer-electric service and repair. Sophisticated diagnostic equipment is a must.
- When taking your vehicle in for servicing, communicate your findings. Be prepared to describe the symptoms. (In larger shops you'll probably speak with a service writer/service manager rather than with the technician directly.) Carry a written list of the symptoms that you can give to the technician or service manager. Avoid suggesting a specific course of repair. Just as you would with your physician, tell where it hurts and how long it's been that way, but let the technician diagnose and recommend a remedy. Stay involved... Ask questions. If you don't understand some terms, ask them to explain to you in easy-to-understand language.
- Avoid rushing the service writer or technician to make an on-the-spot diagnosis. Instead, ask them to call you after they've diagnosed the problem, figured out a solution and costs before you authorize the work. Before you leave the shop, make sure you understand all shop policies regarding prices, guarantees, and acceptable payment methods.

After Your Vehicle Has Been Serviced

- Keep good records; keep all paperwork.
- If the service was not all you expected, don't rush to another shop. Discuss the problem with the service manager or owner. Give the business a chance to resolve the problem. Reputable shops value customer feedback and will make a sincere effort to keep your business.
- On the other hand, if the service is good, then reward the shop with repeat business. It is mutually beneficial to you and the shop owner to establish a relationship.

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