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## How to avoid and repair flat tires

Nothing can delay road trips more suddenly than flat tires. Unfortunately, because tires are the only part of the vehicle constantly in contact with the road, wear and tear is to be expected.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that flat tires and blowouts are a leading cause of highway traffic accidents. Even though flats cannot be prevented, there are ways to make tires less vulnerable and make vehicles safer along the way.

Flat tire avoidance

Routine inspection and tire maintenance is essential to their performance. In addition, paying attention to road hazards and avoiding them when possible can prolong the life of tires.

Tire pressure: Tires should be maintained at the correct air pressure indicated on the sidewall or as advised by the manufacturer. Tires with too much air can be damaged by bumpy roads and potholes. Tires that are not inflated enough may increase friction on the roadway, resulting in a blowout. Check tire pressure routine-

ly, and do so when the tires have rested for three hours. Many vehicles now monitor tire pressure automatically and alert drivers through a signal on the dashboard.

- Tire wear: The advisors at Select Auto Imports say that inspecting tires for uneven wear should be a routine part of maintenance. If tires show uneven wear, they may be more susceptible to flats or blowouts. Tire rotations can help alleviate uneven wear. The NHTSA recommends tires be rotated every 5,000 miles.
- Tire treads: The Allstate Insurance company says to look for worn tire treads. Check for wear bar indicator marks located between the tread pattern of the tires. If the wear bar is level with the treads, it's time for new tires. Otherwise, place a quarter between the grooves of the tire. If the tread doesn't extend beyond the top of Washington's head, it's a good idea to replace the tires.
- Construction sites: Drivers should try to avoid areas under construction. Rocks, nails, metal shards, glass, and divots in the roads

Nothing can delay road ly, and do so when the tires can cause punctures and ips more suddenly than flat have rested for three hours. eventually flats.

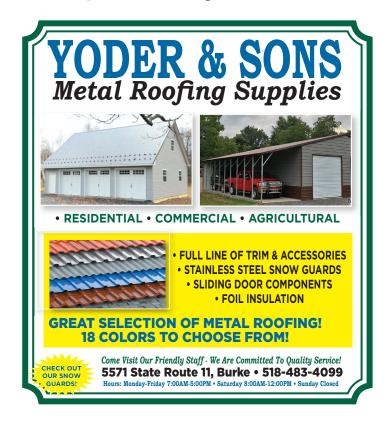
Flat tire repair

When flats occur, having the right tools and understanding the procedure for fixing the flat is key.

Drivers will need an inflated spare tire, a jack, a lug wrench, bracing material (to keep the vehicle from rolling, such as a brick or piece of wood), and the vehicle's owner's manual. Goodyear says it is essential to fix the flat in a safe area away from traffic and on a flat surface.

- Use the owner's manual to find the correct position to place the jack to lift the car.
- Remove hubcaps or center covers to access the lug nuts. With the lug wrench, loosen lug nuts in a counterclockwise direction.
- Take off the tire and put on the spare. Replace and tighten the lug nuts. Replace hubcaps or covers.
- Slowly lower the vehicle and drive cautiously to ensure the spare is in working order.
- Purchase a new tire or have a hole plugged or repaired at a tire center.







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## Vision greatly affects driving ability

Metro

Driving is a multisensory experience that requires careful coordination and mastery of a wide array of skills. Understanding the rules of the road and having sufficient practice are only part of the equation. Being able to see the road and react to obstacles, signage and more is crucial. Drivers should not downplay the importance of visual acuity when they turn their ignition keys.

Acceptable vision is involved in all components of driving. Motor vehicle operators need to have clear vision to read gauges and operate the controls of the car. Distance vision also is essential to identifying road hazards and seeing other cars on the road. The health resource All About Vision says aging and visual changes at any age can affect a person's ability to see moving objects while one is in motion — as is the case while driving a car or truck. In addition, changes in peripheral vision can increase blind spots while driving and affect reaction time.

#### **Aging motorists**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 6,165 people ages 65 and older were killed in automobile accidents in 2015, representing 18 percent of all traffic crashes in the United States, and declining vision may have been a factor in many of those accidents. Older drivers can make certain changes to improve their safety on the roadways.

- Reduce driving at night. The group AAA says by age 60 eyes need three times as much light to see as they did at age 20. Over time pupils get smaller and do not dilate as much in dark conditions at night, making it harder to see. Limit driving at night as much as possible.
- Accommodate for glare. Invest in anti-glare coatings for glasses to minimize glare from the sun and oncoming headlights.

- Be especially cautious at intersections. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety says 40 percent of the fatal collisions that occur for people age 70 and older take place at intersections. Taking more time to assess oncoming traffic and make sure intersections are clear can save lives.
- Get frequent vision checks. Annual eye exams are recommended by the American Optometric Association. This can help older drivers be aware of shortcomings in their vision.

#### Other drivers

Drivers of any age with vision issues should take heed of their limitations and make modifications as needed.

- Driving with macular degeneration. Macular degeneration affects central vision. It happens when deterioration of the central portion of the retina occurs. The American Macular Degeneration Foundation says MD is the leading cause of vision loss. As MD impacts vision, driving may need to be reduced or ceased.
- Color blindness impacts driving. Those with color blindness may need to use caution when identifying traffic signals or the brake lights of other vehicles. It may take practice and driving with someone who sees colors to become comfortable.
- Cataracts can blur vision. Those with cataracts may have blurry vision and see halos around lights that can make driving challenging. Cataracts also may make it more difficult to see pedestrians against the landscape, especially at night. Treating cataracts can improve vision significantly.

Many motor vehicle agency vision tests do not take into consideration all of the factors that can impact vision while driving. Seeking care for visual problems and changing driving habits when necessary can help people stay safe on the road.



## The importance of routine vehicle maintenance

Metro

Owning a car is a big responsibility. Drivers who plan to keep their vehicles for the long haul must emphasize maintenance if they want to keep adding miles to their odometers. In fact, the automotive information site CarAdvice says that routine maintenance may be the most important thing drivers can do for their vehicles.

A vehicle needs consistent care if it is to run efficiently. Maintenance also reduces the risk of roadside breakdowns and costly repairs. Here's a look at some of the benefits of staying on top of maintenance.

■ Saves money: Even though maintenance costs money, sticking to a consistent maintenance schedule can save big bucks in the long run. For example, the cost of rotating and aligning tires is considerably less than repairing a car after a major blowout and paying for a tow and tire replacement.

- Improves performance and efficiency: Routine maintenance includes oil changes, filter changes and fluid topoffs. Such tasks keep engines running smoothly. Ignoring this routine maintenance can put engines in jeopardy of breaking down and adversely affect vehicle performance, diminishing fuel economy and leading to a sluggish ride.
- Identifies safety issues: Routine inspections and work performed by reputable service stations help drivers stay abreast of recalls or issues that can affect the safety

of the vehicle.

- Maintains a maintenance record: When the time comes to sell the vehicle, having a log of routine maintenance indicates to potential buyers that the vehicle was well cared for.
- Keeps compliance: Vehicles covered under manufacturer's warranties typically need to be maintained in adherence to factory-recommended maintenance schedules. This ensures that the vehicle is in compliance and will be covered in the event of a warranty claim.

Routine vehicle maintenance is important for a variety of reasons. Drivers can work with a trusted and reliable mechanic to develop a schedule that keeps their cars and trucks on the road.



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# Light the way for safer nighttime driving

Routine vehicle maintenance protects drivers on the road while also protecting the often considerable financial investment they make in their cars and trucks. Maintenance guidelines have changed thanks to technology, but drivers must continue to care for their vehicles to ensure the safety of themselves, their passengers and fellow motorists.

From the time they first get behind the wheel, many drivers recognize the need to periodically change their oil and have their tires rotated. But few drivers may understand the importance of maintaining their vehicles' headlights, and just how compromised they and their passengers might be when driving with old, dimming or foggy headlamps.

Burned out lights greatly diminish driver visibility and may even draw the attention of law enforcement. But headlight bulbs don't just burn out overnight. As bulbs age, their light output gradually reduces due to use and factors such as humidity, electrical resistance and filament fatigue. Drivers concerned about the efficacy of their headlight bulbs can take steps to improve their visibility when driving at night.

- Accept your own vulnerability. The human eye is not adapted for nocturnal vision. As a result, drivers' visual acuity may be reduced by as much as 70 percent when driving at night. Cloudy, dim headlights only exacerbate that problem, further compromising the safety of everyone on the road. Avoid aggressive driving and always obey the speed limits, even when it's late at night and roads are empty.
- Learn to recognize headlamp clouding. According to the automotive lighting innovator Lumileds, sunlight, ozone, road pollution, and even chemicals used in car washes can contribute to headlamp clouding. Clouded headlamps often appear hazed and yellow and



METRO

reduce headlight output considerably. Routine headlamp inspection can help drivers discover clouded lamps that can greatly compromise nighttime visibility.

- Restore clouded headlamps. Clouded headlamps do not necessarily need to be replaced. The Philips Headlight Restoration Kit can help drivers restore their clouded headlamp lenses. The kit employs a protective UV coating that effectively restores yellow, hazy lenses that have been compromised by years of exposure to the elements.
- Replace headlamps that are past their prime. While not all clouded headlamps need to be replaced, some aging or outdated bulbs are best replaced with new models designed to produce substantially more light output. Drivers whose ve-

hicles are equipped with standard halogen headlights may be surprised to learn that such lights typically begin to break down within two to three years of installation, during which time light output might be reduced by as much as 30 percent. Compared to standard halogen bulbs, Philips X-tremeVision Bulbs can put substantially more light on the road while producing longer beam patterns that make it easier for drivers to see more of what's ahead of them at night.

Drivers' visibility is dramatically reduced once the sun goes down, but maintaining headlamps can help drivers combat that loss of vision. More information about headlamp maintenance and the alternatives to traditional halogen headlights is available at www.philips.com/automotive.

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## Utility vehicles: What's the difference?

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The terms 'sport utility vehicle (SUV)' and 'crossover' (also dubbed a compact sport utility vehicle, or CUV) are heard quite frequently and sometimes used interchangeably. It can be easy to blur the terms because of the subtle differences between these types of vehicles. But upon careful interpretation of these ultra-popular vehicles, the variations between them become more apparent. The frames of these vehicles can help people distinguish between them. Many car experts refer to SUVs as those vehicles that are equipped with the chassis of a truck, while crossovers are based on a car's platform. SUVs rely on a 'body on frame,' which means the body is built separately from the frame of the vehicle and then assembled later on. Crossovers use 'unibody' architecture, which means the body and frame are one piece. SUVs are classified as a light truck and have the towing and performance capabilities of a pickup truck. As a result, the wheelbase, floorplan, suspension, powertrain, and other SUV arrangements are similar to those of a pickup. Conversely, crossovers use the platform of a sedan and handle much more like traditional passenger cars, offering smooth rides and responsive handling. Crossovers are often smaller than SŪVs and may not have the off-roading or towing capacities of SUVs. Another difference is the driveline. Most SUVs employ four-wheel drive systems, while crossovers have two-wheel drive systems.



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Maintaining a vehicle's interior can help owners protect its resale value.



# How to maintain car value over the long-term

Metro

When shopping for a new car, savvy buyers know finding the right car involves more than just finding the most comfortable or flashy vehicle. Numerous factors, including resale value, determine what makes a car the right car for a particular buyer.

Various websites and automotive resources rank vehicles based on their potential resale value, and drivers can do much to ensure their cars and trucks maintain that resale value over the long-term.

■ Pay attention to the exterior. Much like homes with strong curb appeal can help homeowners get the best price for their homes when those homes are on the market, vehicles that look good can make strong first impressions on prospective buyers. Address any dings or dents on the car before putting it on the market, and make sure the car gets a thorough washing and waxing prior to showcasing it for potential buyers.

Upon purchasing new vehicles, drivers with their minds on maintaining resale values can park their cars or trucks in garages as often as possible to protect them from the elements. In addition, when parking in public, avoid tight parking spaces that can increase the likelihood that other drivers will ding or dent the vehicle when entering or exiting their own cars.

■ Protect the interior. A well-maintained interior will impress buyers on multiple levels. Preowned buyers may feel more comfortable buying cars with well-maintained interiors that still make them feel as if they're buying a new vehicle. Vehicles with well-maintained interiors also give buyers the impression that sellers care about the vehicle and prioritized maintenance.

Avoid eating in the car, and immediately address any spills or stains. When taking the vehicle to a car wash, spend the extra money to have the interior cleaned as well. Seat covers can help protect cloth and leather interiors from spills, stains and cracking.

Keep maintenance receipts. Another way to maintain resale value is to keep all maintenance receipts from the moment the vehicle is purchased. Preowned vehicle buyers are making substantial investments when buying preowned cars, and many will want to be certain they're investing in the right cars and trucks. Documentation with regards to the vehicle's maintenance can assuage any fears buyers may have and help sellers get the most money possible when putting their cars on the market.

Maintaining resale value is a concern for new car buyers who want to get the best returns on their automotive investments.

## What car colors may say about drivers

Metro

Cars and trucks may be modes of transportation, but many people see their vehicles as extensions of their personalities.

The color of a vehicle can say a lot about its driver. In fact, automotive experts say color affects drivers' decisions when they're buying new vehicles. In 2015, a survev from PPG Automotive Coatings found the color palette of black, silver, gray, and white makes up 75 percent of new cars on the road. White has been the most popular car color for years, perhaps because neutral tones tend to look new for years, improving resale value as a result.

The Pantone Color Institute periodically highlights popular trends in colors for home decorating, graphic design, fashion, and much more. Their experts know a thing about what color can say about a person. Here's a look at how drivers may perceive themselves (and how others view them) based on their color choices in vehi-



cles, courtesy of Pantone, NerdWallet, Thrillist, and Today.com.

- White: This color perhaps thanks to the popularity of Apple products can often project a persona of a diligent, hardworking person. White is a dependable color that also is sleek and modern. Many people who prefer white also like the purity of the color and its perceived cleanliness.
- Black: Black vehicles have stood the test of time as status symbols. Those

who purchase black cars may view them as classic and powerful. Black also conveys elegance. That's why limousines and hired cars are often black.

- Silver: Silver cars may have futuristic connotations because of their metallic hues. Silver vehicles also can be elegant and prestigious. A certain element of modernity is associated with silver cars and trucks.
  - Gray: People who

See COLOR 6



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## How to inspect and maintain vehicle belts

Metro

Responsible vehicle ownership involves taking inventory of the automobile and ensuring it is working at peak capacity. Hundreds of parts work together to keep vehicles on the road, but quite often drivers do not look under the hood until something is amiss.

Routine maintenance is widely acknowledged as a critical component of responsible vehicle ownership, but many motorists may not know how to care for their cars. Belts are one example of components that are integral to efficient, well-running vehicles. The automotive resource iDriveSafely.com indicates that belts are some of the most crucial moving parts in the engine. Belts transmit power between shafts, and all belts, from serpentine belts to V-belts to timing belts, all serve important functions.

■ Serpentine belt: Firestone" Complete Auto Care says a serpentine belt is a long,



snaking, winding belt that keeps parts such as the water pump, alternator, power steering pump, and air conditioning running smoothly. Serpentine belts transport power to automotive accessories. A failing serpentine belt can cause enormous and expensive headaches, including overheating and loss of steering power.

V-belts: Also known as drive belts, these are usually found in older vehicles. Unlike serpentine belts, which run through various parts, V-belts run through one or

two accessories. Older cars with many bells and whistles will have multiple V-belts, and should one break, it may not cause as much of an issue as if a serpentine belt were to falter.

■ Timing belt: Advance Auto Parts says that most cars

have interference engines in which the clearance between moving parts is so small that they can end up bumping into each other if they're not running on the same timing as one another. That is where the timing belt comes into play. It connects the crankshaft to the camshaft, helping them stay in sync. Failing to pay attention to a timing belt can result in an expensive engine repair.

Belts have finite service lives, and heat and wear and tear are usually their nemeses. It is important to look for fraying or cracking of belts. Even belts that look new may have worn out grooves that lose their grips on matching pulley grooves. Mechanics often use special gauges to check belts.

Belts also may need to be replaced due to oil or grease contamination that can damage the rubber or synthetic rubber. It is important to check the owner's manual and seek advice from a qualified mechanic about when belts should be serviced.

### Color

From 5

choose gray vehicles may be less concerned about status and more interested in a vehicle that blends in with the crowd. This no-nonsense hue could be ideal for cautious, even-keeled drivers who like to go with the flow.

- Blue: Light blue to midblue cars convey a sense of calm and coolness. Blue is a dependable color and may indicate the person behind the wheel is friendly. Dark blue can be a confidence-booster and also signal authority, as many police cruisers and law enforcement uniforms feature deep blue.
- Red: People who own red cars probably like flash and attention. They're likely magnetic personalities who enjoy standing out in a crowd.

■ Brown/beige: These earth-toned shades may indicate a person who is not pretentious, but easygoing and fiscally responsible. Reliability and comfort is prized above flashiness for those who go brown and beige.

■ Green: Green cars indicate owners who have a very strong sense of self and

care little about what others think of them. They may be the people who march to the beat of their own drums. But the popularity of green cars peaked in the 1990s, so fewer green cars may be on the road today than in the past.

Vehicle colors may say a lot about the people behind the wheel.





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## Charge up your car battery knowledge

Metro

Vehicles consist of many essential components to keep them running efficiently and effectively. Car and truck owners should have an understanding of how their vehicles function so they can diagnose and address problems as they arise.

Car batteries are an important component of any vehicle. Even though engines are the powerhouse of any car or truck, without a battery, the engine wouldn't be able to work. According to Firestone Complete Auto Care, car batteries work by providing a jolt of electricity necessary to power all the electrical components of the vehicle. This is achieved through a chemical reaction that changes chemical energy into the electrical energy needed to deliver voltage to the starter. In addition to initially starting the car, the battery also keeps electric current steady to keep the engine

The battery also works in conjunction with the alternator to power the electronics in the car, according to the automotive information blog Autosessive. While the car is running, the alternator reverses the current produced by the battery, recharging it as a result. This happens during long journeys, so people who drive for short bursts of time may find that their batteries will not have a chance to recharge and may not have the longevity desired.

There is quite literally a lot riding on a functioning battery. No one wants to be caught stranded by a dead battery, so drivers may wonder if there are any indicators that may signal the battery needs replacement.

■ Slow turnover: If a vehicle does not immediately start or if the cranking is sluggish and takes longer to start, it may mean the battery is starting to



Learn the function of a car battery and how to keep it operational.

- Frequent, short trips: Drivers who make frequent, short trips may find their car batteries do not have time to fully recharge. This, coupled with overtaxing thanks to a lot of accessory use, may cause the battery and the alternator to have shortened life spans.
- Low battery fluid levels: If the fluid level is below the energy conductor inside, it is often indicative of overcharging and excessive heat.
- Corrosion: Corrosion buildup, dust, dirt, and grime on battery connections may cause performance problems. Inspecting and cleaning the terminals can prolong the battery life.
  - Odors and leaks: Battery smoothly.

leaks can produce a sulfur odor similar to the smell of a rotten egg. This can become problematic over time, and leaks may indicate an aging or damaged battery.

- Age: Most batteries have a finite life span. A well-maintained battery can last up to five years. Neglect can reduce that life expectancy consider-
- Bloated or cracked battery case: Replace the battery immediately if the case is cracking, as it could be because excessive heat is swelling the

Understanding how car batteries work can help drivers keep their cars running Drive more efficiently

Many people aspire to drive more efficiently in an attempt to conserve fuel, save money and reduce the carbon footprints of their vehicles. But driving efficiently can also make driving safer for motorists, their passengers and everyone else, including pedestrians, sharing the roads.

Drivers who want to drive more efficiently can implement a variety of strategies to do just that.

- Obey the speed limits. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, notes that miles per gallon begins to dip dramatically when vehicles travel above 55 miles per hour. While each vehicle is different. the EPA notes that increasing highway cruising speed from 55 miles per hour to 75 miles per hour can raise fuel consumption by as much as 20
- Do not idle a vehicle. The Environmental Defense Fund

notes that electronic engines do not need to warm up, even in winter when temperatures are especially cold. Vehicles that are idling can produce as much pollution as vehicles that are in motion, and idling for as little as 10 seconds wastes more gas than restarting the engine.

■ Use cruise control wisely. Drivers concerned about fuel economy may be accustomed to turning on their vehicles' cruise control when driving long distances on the highway. While that is an effective and fuel-efficient way to maintain steady speeds, turn cruise control off when traversing roads with steep hills. On such roads, fuel efficiency can be lost because the vehicle engine is working harder to maintain steady speeds.

Driving efficiently can make roadways safer, benefit the environment and save drivers considerable amounts of mon-

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