



FALL CAR CARE

Prevent Breakdowns With Battery Care

Many drivers have experienced the misfortune of getting into their vehicles only to realize their engines won't turn over. Although there may be plenty of reasons why a car will not start, quite frequently a dead battery is to blame. Car batteries can last for five years or more when properly cared for, but many batteries wear down and become inefficient within three years of daily use. Car batteries deteriorate with every charge from a vehicle's engine. Naturally, drivers who are stranded by dead batteries wish they had done more to prevent their battery dying while they're on the road. Certain factors might offer clues as to how much life vehicle batteries have left.

- Longer start time: A dying battery may cause the engine to crank, but it can be slow to start or not seem to exude a lot of power.
- Cranks but doesn't start: You may turn the key to hear the engine trying to turn over, but it won't. Even if the vehicle eventually starts, have the battery checked and, if necessary, replaced by a mechanic.
- A jump start has been necessary: Batteries that have required a jump or multiple jumps are on their last legs and should be replaced immediately.
- Dim lights or check engine indicator: Batteries powers the electric components in a vehicle, so dim lights could be indicative of a loss of power. Having the "check

engine" light come on also can be a clue.

- Extreme temperatures: According to Firestone, hot or cold temperatures can shorten a battery's life. If you live in an extreme climate, your battery may not last as long as the manufacturer suggests it should.
- Short driving trips: People who take many short trips (less than 20 minutes each) may find their batteries do not have enough time to fully recharge, shortening their life expectancy.
- Pungent aroma: Leaking and corrosion around the battery terminals can cause battery issues. If there is a rotten egg smell under the hood, it may be a leaking battery on its way to dying. Drivers can have their vehicle bat-

Fluids To Check Before Your Next Road Trip

For many traveling enthusiasts, few things are more enticing than the open road. Road trips have long been popular, and that popularity appears to be on the rise. Before embarking on road trips, motorists would be wise to inspect their vehicles to ensure their get-aways are not derailed by car troubles.

- Brake fluid: Squeaky brakes are not the only potential indicator of brake problems. Brake fluid, which should always be topped off before beginning a road trip, also might shed light on potentially serious problems. According to the National Motorists Association, brake fluid looks honey-like and translucent when fresh. A puddle beneath a vehicle that is clear to brown and slick indicates a brake fluid leak, which can ultimately lead

to a complete failure of the brakes. The NMA recommends brake fluid be changed at least once every three to four years.

- Transmission fluid: When fresh, transmission fluid is red, darkening over time. However, transmission fluid should never appear brown or black, which indicates potential internal damage to the transmission. To determine if there are any issues with the transmission fluid, the NMA recommends drivers wipe a cool dipstick between their thumb and index finger. If even the slightest bit of grit is felt when wiping the dipstick, the transmission is likely in need of work.
- Oil: Drivers should change their vehicles' oil before embarking on road trips, especially if such trips will be lengthy. The NMA notes that fresh oil is light to dark amber and

translucent, and that is how oil typically looks immediately after an oil change. Oil darkens over time, and that is natural (black oil indicates it's time for an oil change). However, oil that appears cloudy or milky indicates that coolant is getting into the oil, perhaps due to gasket problems. Drivers who are not getting their vehicles' oil changed before a road trip should at least check their oil before leaving to inspect the color of the oil and ensure the vehicle has enough oil.

- Windshield washer fluid: The unknown of the open road is part of what makes it so appealing. While many road trippers plan their trips during the summer and fall when the weather tends to be both pleasant and predictable, there's no guarantee inclement weather won't

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teries tested by mechanics. Batteries can be replaced at home or at a garage. Servicing the vehicle frequently can prevent performance inefficiencies and help determine if any components are straining the battery and causing premature loss of battery life.

rear its ugly head. Filling the windshield washer fluid reservoir before embarking on a trip ensures drivers' visibility won't be adversely affected by unforeseen issues that can soil windshields. Checking fluids before embarking on a road trip can help drivers avoid breakdowns and ensure a safe, fun trip.

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Some Telltale Signs Of Engine Troubles

Engine troubles are many drivers' worst nightmares. Whether they occur out on the road or they prevent drivers from leaving their driveways in the morning, engine troubles can quickly derail plans and cost drivers substantial amounts of money. Thankfully, engine troubles are often noticeable long before cars break down. Drivers who learn to recognize the signs that suggest engines might be in need of work can avoid being stranded on the road or at home.

- Vehicle shaking: One telltale sign of engine trouble is when a vehicle shakes while it's moving. Drivers of old cars and trucks may not expect the smoothest of rides, but cars that shake, sometimes violently, could be experiencing problems. Sometimes a car might shake if its spark plugs need replacing. That's an easy, inexpensive fix that drivers can do on their own in a matter of minutes. A more serious cause of the vehicle shaking could be problems with its timing belt or fuel intake system. Drivers who inspect and/or replace their spark plugs but notice their vehicles are still shaking should take their cars into their mechanics immediately.
- Stalling: Vehicles that jerk or stall also may be experiencing engine troubles. While old spark plugs might be the culprit, stalling or jerking may indicate clogged fuel lines or fuel filters. Such issues may also be traced to issues with the vehicle's computer system. Bring such issues to the attention of a mechanic, and reduce their frequency with regular oil changes.

Drivers who notice they're not getting as much bang for their gas bucks as they used to might have engine troubles to blame. According to Pep Boys, a dropoff in gas mileage might be indicative of an issue in the compression stroke of the engine. Such an issue can typically be fixed by having the fuel system serviced, which will clean the fuel system and can help restore the vehicle's performance and reduce emissions.

- Noises: If driving has become as noisy as a rock concert, drivers should take heed that this could be indicative of engine trouble. Pep Boys notes that noises typically indicate abnormalities in the combustion flow. Such noises may include knocking, hissing and popping. Vehicles making these noises should be taken to a mechanic immediately.

Why Do Brake Rotors Warp?

Braking systems are comprised of various components, including rotors. Rotors are large metal discs that can be seen behind the wheels of the car. Rotors can sometimes appear to warp, and many drivers may question why this occurs or if this is a significant problem. Rotors cannot really warp. Automotive experts note that rotors are metal discs that are cast under extreme heat conditions. It would take a similar application of heat by the braking system for rotors to actually bend, which is impossible. Other factors make rotors appear to be warped, so describing such rotors as "warped" is an easy way to explain the problem to vehicle owners.

For brakes to work correctly, brake pads must be applied squarely and evenly against the rotor. But friction can cause some brake pad materials to form residue on certain areas of the rotor, eventually contributing to uneven rotor surface levels. Some spots become thicker, while others may thin out. Drivers' own habits, including their braking tendencies, can contribute to uneven rotors. The automotive advice resource Your Mechanic says that riding the brakes for prolonged periods of time can cause hot brake pads to "paint" the rotors. So constant braking should be avoided. Drivers also can shift into

a lower gear when driving downhill so that prolonged braking is unnecessary. Also, avoiding frequent hard braking may help. People who live in an area where they're hard on the brakes either because of hilly terrain or traffic may find such environments can take a toll on the performance of their vehicles' brake systems. Brake system issues, such as front brakes having to work harder than rear brakes, or over-torqueing when wheels are installed, also may cause rotors to warp, advise automotive experts state that new pads and brake pads need to be fitted correctly and properly "bedded." Bedding is the initial transfer of friction material from pad to the disc to form a smooth, uniform layer. Break-in instructions should be included with new brake installation. Warped rotors can cause symptoms such as squeaky sounds and lead to jittery feelings in the car when brakes are applied. Such rotors also can cause the vehicle to vibrate when coming to a stop. If warped rotors seem to be an issue, mechanics may be able to put thicker rotors into a lathe to smooth out the residue and restore an even surface, but the problem can come back. It is usually best to replace rotors if they are causing severe vibrations or issues when braking.

Inspect Tires Before Fall Road Trips

Road trips are an autumn tradition for many people. Excursions to see the fall foliage can be awe-inspiring, but drivers must make sure their vehicles can handle such jaunts. Tire inspections are essential before hitting the open road. The following are a handful of steps drivers can take to ensure their tires are up to the task of fall road trips.

- Give tires the eye test. The eye test can be an effective and quick way to detect tire damage. Uneven wear may be indicative of insufficient tire pressure or an alignment problem. Uneven wear also may indicate the vehicle is experiencing problems with its steering or suspension. But many times uneven wear can be remedied by a simple tire rotation, so take your vehicle to your mechanic if you notice uneven wear.
- Look for stowaways. Uneven wear is not the only thing drivers

can detect with their eyes. In the course of your travels, your tire might have picked up a few stowaways, such as nails and screws that are poking into the tire. If you find any freeloaders, take your car to your mechanic, as your tires may need to be replaced.

- Look for cracking or bulging treads. Cracking or bulging treads or sidewalls can eventually cause a blowout, which can put you and your fellow road trippers in serious

jeopardy. Cracked or bulging treads or sidewalls indicate tires are worn or weak, so bring your car to your mechanic for an inspection if you discover such problems.

- Perform the penny test. The penny test can help motorists determine if tire treads are worn. To perform the test, insert a penny with Abraham Lincoln's head pointing upward into the tread. If the tread does not reach the top of Lincoln's head, your tire's treads are worn.
- Check tire pressure. Right before you pack up the car to hit the open road, check each of your tires' pressure, making sure the pressure in each tire is at the level recommended in your owner's manual. Inflating tires to the proper pressure takes just a minute or so, but that minute can protect you and your passengers while also saving you money at the filling station. Properly maintained tires can go a long way toward ensuring the fall road trip season is a success.

Car Care Word Find
Find the hidden words in the puzzle!

BRICKS	FOUNDATION	SECURE
BUILDING	HOUSE	STRUCTURE
CEMENT	INSPECT	WOOD
CONSTRUCTION	MATERIALS	WORKER

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