

## How to take care of your car

- Now that you have a car you own or will pay off and keep a while, let's keep it in good shape.
  - Keeping the transmission in good shape will hold down the repair bills.
    - Stop completely before shifting between drive and reverse.
    - Turn off overdrive unless you'll be driving over 45 mph on level ground. This may require shifting to D3 or 3<sup>rd</sup> gear.
    - To check trans fluid, drive for about 15 minutes, park on level surface, apply the parking brake with engine at idle, carefully shift from park to drive to park.
    - Now check trans dip stick. Wipe clean and check again.
    - If fluid is dark or smells like burnt coffee, replace it.
    - If low, add fluid in same hole as dip stick.
    - Check your owner's manual for correct fluid type.
    - If you drive over 15,000 miles a year, change transmission fluid annually. Fewer miles – every 2 years.
    - You can reduce strain on the trans by using the parking brake when on incline.
  - Test your brakes by pressing 3 times, then holding down. Should feel firm. Should not sink.
    - While holding down, slide other foot under pedal. If it doesn't fit, pedal needs adjustment.
    - A low or sinking pedal means brakes need service.
    - A pulsating pedal can mean a warped or damaged brake disk. Comes from frequent, hard braking.
    - Pulsating pedal when hard braking with Anti-Lock brakes can be normal.
    - Have brakes inspected every 6 months or 6,000 miles. When rotating tires is good time.
    - Waiting for noises or problems can be expensive.
    - Save money on brakes – drive steady speed. Don't speed up and brake frequently.
    - Start using the parking brake. This often adjusts braking system for pad wear.
    - Never drive with your foot touching brake pedal.
  - Now let's check the oil.

- Change every three months or 3,000 miles, whichever comes sooner. Best way to lengthen life of engine.
- I once read of a limousine operator who routinely got 300,000 miles...simply keeping fluids fresh. Oil is your most important fluid.
- Brand name aftermarket filters, such as Fram, Motocraft, STP, Purolator are as good as OEM, but much cheaper.
- No proven need to use synthetic oils. Use regular oil and change regularly. Longer may void warranties.
- Be sure to run the engine for at least 15 minutes before an oil change, so the sludge softens and drains out.
- Replace the drain plug gasket annually.
- Now let's look at the battery.
  - Batteries hate cold weather. Cuts power capacity in half. At the same time, oil is thicker and fuel does not mix as well with cold air. Bad scene.
  - Loose battery connections can give poor starting performance.
  - Inexpensive washers, available at auto parts stores, impede corrosion.
  - You can also coat terminals with Vaseline.
  - Check battery hold-down bracket to make sure it's tight, but not too tight. Could crack battery.
  - Although most new batteries claim "maintenance free" they occasionally need a sip of distilled water. Keep plates covered.
  - Wear eye protection.
  - If adding water in winter, drive car for 15 minutes to mix water so it doesn't freeze on top.
  - A discharged battery can also freeze.
  - Batteries don't last forever. Plan on replacing every four years. Cheaper than roadside break down.
  - Always exchange old battery, for environmental disposal.
  - When shopping for a new battery, get equal or greater CCA.
  - Avoid buying batteries over nine months from manufacture. And fill out warranty card.
- Finally, let's keep our car clean. That keeps down corrosion and other problems.
  - Wash your car regularly. Dirt, leaves, berries, bugs, bird droppings, and salt will damage the finish if left unattended.

- Wash your car in a shady spot.
- Rinse the car before washing with a mild soap.
- Soak any areas that have stubborn spots. Don't rub them hard.
- Start at the top and work down.
- Wax your car twice a year: spring and fall.
- Be sure to use the appropriate wax for your car's finish...especially clear coat finishes.
- Plastic or rubber areas can benefit from treatment products. Make sure area is dry first.
- Check your car carefully for rust.
- Rust should be sanded down to shiny metal
- Next a rust-preventative primer
- Then touch-up paint. Many cars come with a small container.
- Now let's move inside.
  - Don't use your car as a trash can.
  - Vacuum the carpet on a regular basis.
  - Clean carpet and upholstery annually with protective cleaner. Include upholstered side panels.
  - Replace worn floor mats.
  - Inspect sun visors, headliner, and vinyl parts. Repair or replace damaged parts. It'll only get worse, and it'll motivate you to get a new car – expensive.
  - Avoid using cleaners on dash board that may cause glare.
  - Use a sun screen in your windshield. Heat destroys synthetic interior materials.
- Maintaining your car will keep you happy with it longer.
  - But when you do decide to sell, it will make your car worth more. That's dollars in your pocket.