



Car Care: The Key to a Long-Lasting Vehicle

National Car Care Month in April is the time of year to give your car some extra attention. Basic car care is the key to a long-lasting vehicle, improving its safety and dependability, says the Car Care Council.

"Neglected vehicle care almost always means much higher costs down the line in the form of more extensive repairs or lost resale value," said Rich White, executive director, Car Care Council. "Following a routine maintenance program makes financial sense, extending useful vehicle life and helping avoid costly repairs down the road."



The Car Care Council recommends 10 basic maintenance procedures to keep your car operating at its best for the long haul:

- 1. Check all fluids**, including engine oil, power steering, brake and transmission as well as windshield washer solvent and antifreeze/coolant.
- 2. Check the hoses and belts** to make sure they are not cracked, brittle, frayed, loose or showing signs of excessive wear.
- 3. Check the battery** and replace if necessary. Make sure the connection is clean, tight and corrosion-free.
- 4. Check the brake** system annually and have the brake linings, rotors and drums inspected at each oil change.
- 5. Inspect the exhaust** system for leaks, damage and broken supports or hangers if there is an unusual noise. Exhaust leaks can be dangerous and must be corrected without delay.
- 6. Schedule a tune-up** to help the engine deliver the best balance of power and fuel economy and produce the lowest level of emissions.
- 7. Check the heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) system** as proper heating and cooling performance is critical for interior comfort and for safety reasons such as defrosting.
- 8. Inspect the steering and suspension** system annually including shock absorbers, struts and chassis parts such as ball joints, tie rod ends and other related components.
- 9. Check the tires**, including tire pressure and tread. Uneven wear indicates a need for wheel alignment. Tires should also be checked for bulges and bald spots.
- 10. Check the wipers and lighting** so that you can see and be seen. Check that all interior and exterior lighting is working properly and replace worn wiper blades so you can see clearly when driving during precipitation.

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Did you know?

A vehicle identification number, or VIN, is more than just a unique code that distinguishes a car from other vehicles. The VIN can actually tell drivers things about the car as well. By examining the VIN, a driver can learn where his or her car was assembled, the model year of the vehicle, the manufacturer of the vehicle and even the model of the vehicle. How to read a VIN is not something drivers learn in educational courses, so those who want to learn how to decode their VIN can contact the manufacturer of their vehicles. Understanding how to read a VIN can help car buyers determine if the car they are buying is stolen or if the seller is attempting to mislead them in another way. In addition, when drivers have the correct VIN number for a vehicle, they can use that to gain access to a vehicle history report on the car or truck. Such reports will indicate the vehicle's ownership and accident history, further protecting buyers from purchasing a lemon or stolen vehicle.

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The Relationship Between Paint & Mood

Painting is one of the easiest and least expensive ways to transform the look of a space. The colors homeowners choose for their walls can give rooms their own unique feel and even affect the moods of the people within them.

Finding the right shade for a bedroom or kitchen involves more than just selecting the first color that catches your eye. Design experts and psychologists alike say it may be worthwhile to choose a color that helps you feel good rather than just following design trends. The paint color you pick may add energy to a space or create a tranquil retreat where you can unwind at the end of the day.

Blue

To create a spa-like environment and a more serene space, look to shades of blue in soft variations. Cool blues are soothing colors that can help lower stress levels and promote sleep. That's why blue is a frequent fixture in bedrooms and bathrooms. Just be advised that too much blue can make a room appear cold and stark, so balance out blue with some warmer accents.

Orange

Many people do not immediately consider bright orange for their homes, but when used as an accent shade, orange can really brighten up a home. Orange is considered a shade that expands creativity and imparts a youthful appeal to a space. Consider an

orange accent wall or a burst of color with orange throw pillows. If pumpkin orange is a little too bold for you, tone it down by choosing a more pastel, peachy hue, which is equally warm and energizing.

Red

Red stimulates energy and appetite, which is why the shade is so popular in restaurants and home dining spaces. Red is a good choice for social gathering rooms but may not be the wisest choice for a bedroom, as the color may prove overstimulating.

Green

Green can evoke composure and tranquility and works in any room of the house. Since green is the primary color of nature, it also works well for those people who want to bring some of the outdoors inside and work with the fresh starts and new growth that green can inspire. To make green feel less subdued and sleepy, work with its complementary opposite, red, by using a few bold red accents here and there to balance out the tranquility of green.

Purple

People have long related purple to royalty, and this dramatic

color can add a formal, regal aspect to a home depending on the hue. Purple also may help stimulate the creative side of the brain. In paler shades of lavender, purple can seem almost ethereal and spiritual. Some designers suggest avoiding purple in a bedroom because that is a place you want your brain to rest rather than be stimulated.

Yellow

Few colors are more vibrant than yellow, which can help stimulate conversation and make thoughts more focused. A luminous shade of yellow is an ideal way to make any space more welcoming and bright. Just use it sparingly, as too much yellow may not be a good thing. Yellow accents mixed with touches of purple can offer the balance needed to prevent yellow rooms from overwhelming residents and guests.

Home decorators should keep in mind that colors can

be blended to create the desired

environment. A color scheme based on complementary colors, or those opposite on the color wheel, may fit. Otherwise, analogous color schemes, or those colors that are next to one another on the color wheel, can create a variation that suits your design needs.

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