

# How to Give a Car a Complete Clean

Cleaning a car is a piece of cake, right? Though the initial response might be a resounding yes, there's more to a clean car than some soap and water. In fact, as the Car Care Council notes, cleaning a car is a far more intricate process than one might think.

The first step in cleaning the car is to wash it. Give it a good rinsing from top to bottom, including the wheels and inside the fenders. Always clean the tires and wheels before washing the body, and don't use the same mitt for both. This way you'll avoid contaminating the vehicle's paint with debris from the wheels and tires.

Use a good tire cleaner with a stiff brush to improve your tires' appearance, even if you don't have white sidewalls or white letter tires. Next, clean the wheels with a wheel cleaner that removes the brake dust, which often blackens the front wheels. Application of these cleaners varies, so be sure to follow the directions on the container.

Now it's time to wash the body. Use a product sold specifically for automobiles, as household cleaners can strip the wax from the paint and damage the finish. Starting at the



When cleaning a car, it's important to focus on the tires as well as the body.

top, wash one section at a time, thoroughly rinsing away the soap. Work your way down toward the front, sides and rear of the vehicle. Clean the rear last since it usually has the largest accumulation of dirt and grime, which can contaminate the wash mitt. Wash the inside door jams about once a month.

To rinse, remove the spray nozzle from the hose. Starting at the top, let the water cascade down the surfaces of the vehicle. Then, to avoid water spotting, dry with a chamois or other product made for this purpose.

Now is an excellent time for waxing, which not

only protects the finish but also makes subsequent washing easier. Before proceeding, look for foreign particles on the paint. Use a car cleaner, available at auto supply stores, to remove contaminants imbedded in the paint.

Once the surface is clean, apply the wax by following the manufacturer's instructions for application of the product. Typically, manufacturers suggest not applying wax in sunlight.

While keeping your vehicle clean doesn't require a lot of effort, says the Council, it does foster a feeling of pride and accomplishment.

# Tap Into The Fountain Of Youth For Your Car

Regular Oil & Filter Change Helps Your Vehicle Live to a Ripe Old Age

If you have postponed buying a car because of a weak economy you are not alone. More than 100,000 potential new vehicle owners are planning to hold onto their vehicles much longer than they originally intended to, says Edmunds.com, an online automotive resource. Under these circumstances, there is no better way to ensure that your vehicle will continue to serve you well long-term than by regularly changing its oil and filter.

Using the correct grade oil and premium oil filters at the vehicle manufacturer's recommended intervals keeps contaminants out and protects the engine from damage.

Like cells, muscles and tissues in the human body, mechanical systems work in concert with one another. While oil protects, lubricates and cools mechanical components and keeps them working together with minimum friction, the oil filter plays the crucial role of sifting out harmful contaminants such as dirt, metallic shavings, and other potentially damaging particles. Therefore, failure to change the oil and filter routinely can lead to harmful sludge build-up and premature engine wear, resulting in major repairs and, in extreme cases, complete engine failure.

## Reaping the Benefits of Premium Technology

Modern vehicles pose new challenges for oil filter manufacturers. Today's smaller, hard-working engines are built with tighter tolerances and run lighter weight oil to reduce friction and save fuel. So premium filters that are manufactured with cutting edge technology are the best replacement option for any vehicle.

Premium oil filters are designed to ensure that clean oil flows unrestricted through the system.

## Accommodating Advances In Filter Design and Construction

To accommodate developments in vehicle and



Using the correct grade oil and premium oil filters can help add years to a vehicle's life.

engine design, as well as more demanding operating environments, today's oil filters must have media, seals and bonding agents that are fully compatible with all popular conventional and synthetic oils. They must accommodate new oil chemistry that has seen levels of zinc (ZDDP) reduced and, in some cases, supplanted by other, more eco-friendly materials. Oil filters must perform reliably with oil viscosities ranging from the traditional 10W-30 and 10W-40 to ultra-low-friction 0W-20 oils.

As a result, the design, construction and materials in oil filters have all seen enhancements over the last few years.

## So, What's The Bottom Line?

According to the Car

Care Council, drivers should follow the guidelines given in their vehicle owner's manual to select the correct grade of oil and change it as often as suggested by the manufacturer, typically 3,000 to 5,000 miles. However, the Council also warns, that if driving is 'severe,' such as frequent short trips, driving in stop-and-go traffic, idling for extended periods of time, driving in areas where the air is dusty or dirty, living in a cold region or towing a trailer, it's better to stick to the tried-and-true three months or 3,000 mile schedule.

The bottom line? Changing the oil and filter on your vehicle frequently -- especially if you plan to own it for a while -- will enable it to perform at its best to a ripe old age.

# Now is the Time to Winterize Your Vehicle

Bethesda, MD --More than 70 percent of motorists admit that they did not have their cars winterized in preparation for inclement weather, according to a survey conducted by the Car Care Council. This can prove extremely dangerous if your car breaks down due to a lack of preventative maintenance. Why take the risk?

The good news is that it's not too late to prepare your vehicle for harsh winter weather. The Car Care Council recommends the following tasks be per-

formed by a do-it-yourselfer or professional automotive technician:

Check the coolant (antifreeze) every year; coolant should be flushed and refilled at least every two years in most vehicles.

Check the owner's manual to see if your driving habits are considered "severe," and if so, have the oil changed accordingly, usually every 3,000 miles; consider changing to a "winter weight" oil if you live in a cold climate.

Check the battery and exhaust system.

Be certain the heater and defroster are working properly.

Keep the gas tank at least half full, decreasing the chances of moisture forming in the gas lines and possibly freezing.

Check tire tread depth and tire pressure; consider special tires if snow and ice are a problem in your area.

Make sure the headlights work and are properly aimed.

Replace wiper blades every six months; consider special snow blades if the weather dictates.

# Questions to Ask Car Dealers

For consumers who know the right questions to ask car dealers, shopping for a car or truck can be a straightforward process.

Before deciding what car to shop for, a few decisions must be made. Will you be looking for a new or pre-owned vehicle? Front-wheel drive or AWD? SUV, sedan or pickup? How much can you afford to spend, both on a down payment as well as monthly payments if financing the vehicle?

According to the Better Business Bureau, preliminary research is an important part of the buying process. The local newspaper's weekly auto section can be a great place to gather information, as can Web sites that provide reviews, comparisons and advice on an array of vehicles.

Comparison shopping is also essential when shop-

ping for a vehicle. Things to compare include safety record or rating, reliability history, fuel economy, warranties, operating costs, theft rates, and general features and options. It might also be a good idea for prospective buyers to request an insurance quote on a particular vehicle before making any purchase final, as insurance rates can vary greatly not only for drivers, but for specific makes and models as well.

Once you've decided on which make and model you'd prefer, be sure to ask the dealer the following questions to ensure you're getting the best deal possible.

\* Which vehicle features come standard and which are options? Ask to see an itemized list of all add-ons, options and fees separate from the cost of the vehicle.

\* Can pricey options be removed prior to the purchase, thus lowering the cost?

\* What is the trade-in value of a current vehicle?

\* What inspection standards or reconditioning processes does the dealer use to prepare pre-owned or even new vehicles for purchase?

\* Are maintenance and repairs provided on site?

\* What information or documents are required when financing the vehicle through the dealer?

\* What warranties are available on the vehicle?

\* Is the dealer accredited by the Better Business Bureau?

Receiving satisfactory answers to these questions does not guarantee a perfect buyer-dealer relationship, but should give the buyer a much clearer understanding of the transaction.

# Vehicle Prep for Daylight Savings Time: Inspect Your Vehicle's Lights So You're Not Left in the Dark

Proper vehicle lighting will be vital to safety when daylight-savings time ends on October 26. To prepare for fewer hours of daylight and the extra hours of darkness, the Car Care Council encourages motorists to take a few minutes to inspect their vehicles to ensure that all of the lights are working properly.

The Car Care Council recommends checking all vehicle lighting on a monthly basis, including the headlights, turn signals, brake lights, side lights, parking lights, tail lights, backup lights and license plate lights. Whether you do it yourself or visit a professional auto-

motive technician, it is important to repair or replace non-functioning lights immediately.

Something as simple as a burnt-out brake light could potentially have major consequences. Results of vehicle inspections during National Car Care Month found:

8 percent of vehicles inspected needed work on at least one of their turn

signals.

6 percent of vehicles had problems with at least one of their brake lights.

5 percent of vehicles failed their side light inspection.

1 percent of vehicles failed the inspection for their headlights, parking lights, tail lights, backup lights and license plate lights.

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