



More Bang For Your Buck: Routine Maintenance to Protect Your Vehicle Investment and Add Years to Its Life

(MS) — Most people today are interested in saving money. With an economy that hasn't fully rebounded and economic uncertainty still looming, the search is on for ways to stretch money further. Unfortunately, some motorists think that skimping on routine vehicle maintenance is an easy way to save a few dollars. While this might work in the short term, failure to properly maintain a vehicle will almost certainly come back to haunt you down the road. The experts at AMSOIL INC., the industry leader in synthetic motor oil, urge drivers to protect their vehicle investments by practicing continued maintenance of

their cars and trucks for reliable performance and retained value. Many are aware of the old adage, "You have to spend money to make money." When it comes to vehicle maintenance, drivers should spend money to save money, since failing to maintain a vehicle can cause its resale value to plummet. Routine maintenance such as tire rotation and oil changes can prevent costly repairs to the engine and transmission, among other things. A car is a long-term investment and the better drivers treat their vehicles, the better those vehicles will treat them in return.

* Don't skimp on necessities. It's best to replace a timing belt,

spark plugs and tires on schedule, rather than risk inconvenient vehicle breakdowns and the need for costly repairs in the near future. Staying on top of monitoring worn auto parts both big and small will result in less wear and tear, helping the vehicle retain its resale value.

* Follow guidelines for oil changes. Motor oil is the lifeblood of your vehicle's engine, and it's best to adhere to oil change schedules set by either the vehicle or lubricant manufacturer. This will ensure the vehicle is adequately lubricated and running as efficiently as possible. When selecting motor oil consider synthetic lubricants, which greatly enhance a vehicle's

performance. The uniform molecular structure of synthetic oil helps engines operate more efficiently by reducing friction and wear, while improving performance in extreme temperatures. Premium synthetic motor oils also have the ability to improve fuel economy and are better for the environment because they require fewer changes.

* When cold weather arrives have antifreeze performance checked. Your mechanic should be happy to check antifreeze levels for free. When a hydrometer shows it can no longer withstand temperatures of 30 degrees or lower, the antifreeze should be re-

placed. This typically occurs every two years. It's also a good idea to occasionally turn on the air conditioner in the car during the winter, just to ensure it stays lubricated.

* Keep tires properly inflated. Fluctuations in temperature can mean fluctuations in the inflation level of tires as well. Tires that are not properly inflated can lead to poor fuel efficiency and premature wear. It's a good idea to get in the habit of checking the PSI level at least once a month.

* Use well-tested products. There are shelves and shelves of products at auto parts stores and big box retailers. It pays to do your research into the products profes-

sionals recommend. Since the early 1970s, AMSOIL has been an industry leader in synthetic motor oil and garners the testimonials of top auto racers, automotive enthusiasts and regular drivers worldwide. More information is available at www.amsoil.com.

* Set up a maintenance schedule and document maintenance. Whenever you do routine vehicle maintenance or have significant work done, keep good records. Keeping track of maintenance can be useful to show how well you cared for the car and increase its resale value when it comes that time.

Simple ways to add years to a vehicle's life

Getting more for your money is a popular trend among consumers. As economic uncertainty reigns, smart consumers are looking for the best values in an effort to get the most out of each and every dollar they spend.

One of the best ways to stretch a dollar is to take better care of your vehicle. Buying a home and financing a college education are perhaps the only times many consumers will spend more money than they do when purchasing a vehicle. But unlike a home or an education, few people take their vehicles seriously, all too often avoiding vehicle maintenance that can greatly increase a car or truck's life expectancy.

Drivers who want to keep their cars going strong for years to come can do so in a handful of ways.

* Prevent, prevent, prevent. Preventive maintenance might seem like a boring way to spend a weekend morning or afternoon, but the efforts will be well worth it. Oil changes and filter replacements are quick and easy jobs but pay major dividends over the long haul. Drivers who aren't comfortable performing these tasks themselves need not worry about costly trips to the mechanic. Routine jobs like an oil change or air filter replacement are relatively inexpensive, and today's vehicles can go much longer between oil changes and filter replacements. Each vehicle manufacturer is dif-

ferent, so drivers should consult their owner's manual and adhere to the recommended maintenance schedule.

* Stay balanced. Balanced tires are tires that will last longer. But an out of balance tire will not only shorten the life of tires, it can also do damage to the rest of the vehicle while simultaneously making riding in the car much less comfortable. When a tire is properly balanced, its mass is uniformly distributed around the axle, making for a smooth, vibration-free ride. However, an out of balance tire shortens the life expectancy of suspension components, including bearings and shocks. Repairs that result from an unbalanced tire can prove costly. Should a vibration occur as the vehicle accelerates (typically, this vibration will be noticeable when the car reaches speeds of 40-45 mph), chances are the tires are not properly balanced.

* Look good, feel good. The credo of "look good, feel good" isn't only applicable to humans. In fact, a car that looks good likely feels good as well. Washing and waxing a car regularly helps avoid rust under the carriage and in the wheel wells. The longer a car goes between washes, the more likely it is to rust, and the paint is likely to corrode as well. There is no quick fix to either of these problems, but preventive maintenance, like routinely washing and waxing the vehicle, can keep

these potentially menacing issues from ever rearing their rusty heads. Preventing rust and corrosion is also a good way to ensure a car's resale value does not diminish over time.

* Get out and drive. Cars that spend most of their life in stop-and-go traffic likely won't last as long as those that routinely get out and go. That's because city driving with lots of stopping and going is very taxing on an engine. On a highway, air flow to the radiator, oil flow to the engine and everything that makes a car run is much more consistent, reducing the stress on the engine as a result. Constantly accelerating and decelerating is hard on an engine, while the consistent speeds of highway driving offer a welcome respite to the engine. City dwellers should get out and drive their car on a highway at least once a month for no less than 30 minutes. This is also a good way to get rid of potentially harmful condensation that can negatively impact engine performance.

When looking to get more for your money, one of the best ways to do so is to take better care of the car sitting in your driveway.

Much like curb appeal improving the chances of a sale on your home, having a car that is presented well inside and out may boost the amount of money and potential of a resale on your vehicle. Even vehicle owners who don't anticipate selling their vehicles in the near future should maintain the vehicles to ensure they are safe and sound.

After home and work, a car is where many people spend most of their time. As a result, a vehicle can easily become soiled, scratched or overrun with clutter. Maintaining the interior of your vehicle need not take much time or effort, but it should be done often enough to keep on top of the mess. Here's how to start.

Remove Clutter

The first step in cleaning the interior is to remove the excess items that may have accumulated in the car. Busy families tend to leave toys, books or clothing in their vehicles. There also may be discarded food wrappers or beverage containers. People who commute also may accumulate a number of items in their cars, including business materials. These items should be sorted through and put where they belong before tackling the rest of the cleaning work.

Vacuum

Much of the dirt and debris that accumulates in vehicles can easily be removed with a vacuum. A shop vac will have enough power to thoroughly clean upholstery and

mats. If you do not have one, visit a self car wash.

Remove the floor mats and set them on a flat surface. Thoroughly vacuum the mats to clear them of dust, dirt, food crumbs, and any other debris. Vacuum the floor of the car as well as any seat upholstery that may be a catch-all for crumbs. Using a soft-bristled vacuum attachment, you also can remove dust from the vents, speakers and the center console of your vehicle.

Spot cleaning

Spills and stains do occur in vehicles, just as they do elsewhere. Cleaning these stains may require a little elbow grease and a cleaning agent. Most automotive supply stores will sell an upholstery cleaner designed for car interiors. You also can use a mixture of laundry detergent and water applied with a slightly damp rag or sponge. Go over each area that is soiled so you can devote adequate time to each stain. The same process can be used on the vehicle's carpeting. Use a brush to really clean heavily soiled areas.

Leather upholstery can be more delicate than cloth upholstery. When cleaning a leather interior, use only products that are designed specifically for leather so as to avoid damaging the interior. Console and dashboard detailing

A barely moist cloth can be used to clean the plastic components of the dashboard and consoles of the vehicle. The goal is to wipe away any dust and any minor

stains or sticky areas without saturating important electrical components. It is always better to spray polish or cleaning agents on your cloth than directly on the dashboard. In hard-to-reach-areas, consider using a soft-bristled paintbrush or cotton swabs to clean in crevices. Wipe down everything with a dry cloth or towel afterward.

Windows

Having clean windows is essential to driving safely. Cleaning the windshield and windows is relatively simple to do with a glass cleaner spray and a lint-free cloth. Use caution when cleaning the rear windshield if it has a defogger/defroster grid on the window. These wires can be damaged easily. Clean with the direction of the defroster grid lines.

Freshen the car

Place an air freshener or spray a product on the air intake vent to eradicate musty smells in the car. It also is important to replace the cabin air filter periodically, otherwise you could be breathing in dust and dander that is trapped in the filter.

These are the basic steps to cleaning a car's interior. Other detail work can be done depending on your preferences and the make of the car. Routine maintenance helps others see you have pride in your vehicle and can ensure a better return on your investment down the line if you choose to sell.

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