



## Simple ways to extend the life of your vehicle

According to data from TrueCar.com, in 2012 the average new car cost \$30,500.

That's a considerable expense, especially at a time when fuel costs remain high and cost of living continues to rise. Because new cars have become so expensive, more and more vehicle owners are looking for ways to extend the life of their vehicles. The longer a car can stay on the road, the better an investment that vehicle becomes. Fortunately, there are several steps vehicle owners can take that should ensure their vehicles stay on the road for years to come.

\* Scale back on short trips. The toll cold starts take on a vehicle can add up over time. When a car is started, condensation builds up in the vehicle's exhaust system. On longer trips, that condensation will gradually evaporate. However, on short trips, that condensation often does not have enough time to evaporate, and over time too many short trips will lead to an accumulation of water in the muffler that can lead to rust and rust holes on the muffler. Short trips also can negatively affect gas mileage. When possible, leave your car at home on trips into town when you can just as easily walk or ride a bicycle. Over time, reducing the amount of short trips you take in your car will greatly reduce wear and tear on your vehicle and improve your fuel efficiency as well.

\* Stick to the manufacturer's recommended maintenance sched-

ule. Adhering to your vehicle's maintenance schedule serves many purposes, including improving the its durability and protecting various components, including its cooling system and drivetrain. While many manufacturers used to recommend changing a vehicle's oil every 3,000 miles, many of today's newer automobiles need their oil changed less frequently. Check your owner's manual for manufacturer recommendations regarding oil changes, and don't forget to replace the oil filter when changing your vehicle's oil.

\* Pay attention to brake pads. Brake pads that are allowed to wear down can cause damage to the brakes' rotors and calipers. That damage can prove costly and make things harder on your vehicle. Keep an eye on your vehicle's brake pads, which are far less expensive to replace than rotors and calipers, and do not allow them to wear down to metal.

\* Keep your tires properly inflated. Tires that are under-inflated will negatively impact your vehicle's fuel efficiency. In addition, the tires' life expectancy is reduced considerably when tires are not properly inflated. Routinely check your tire pressure, especially if you drive a lot, and keep tires inflated at the pressure recommended in your vehicle's owner's manual.

\* Be mindful when filling up your tank. Many people do not pay much attention to their surroundings when pulling into the filling



Keeping a vehicle's interior clean can make it more enjoyable to drive while encouraging owners to keep their cars for longer periods of time.

station. But when you fill up can impact your car's life expectancy. Perhaps the worst time to fill your tank is when the fuel tanker is in the gas station refilling the underground tanks. That's because the process of filling the underground tanks can stir up sediment that had settled at the bottom of those tanks. If that sediment finds its way into your vehicle's gas tank, it can clog filters and fuel injectors and negatively affect the vehicle's performance. So unless your car is running on empty, avoid refilling its gas tank when the tanker is still in the station.

\* Take care of your vehicle's interior, too. Caring for a car is not just about being good to what's under the hood. Caring for the car's interior will not necessarily impact its performance, but a well-kept interior will

improve how you look at your vehicle and how much you enjoy driving it. The longer you enjoy driving your vehicle, the longer you are likely to keep it. Preserve the vehicle's door and window seals; clean the dashboard, including the gauges, vacuum the floor mats; and wipe down the vehicle's interior, whether it's cloth or leather. Keeping up the appearance of the car's interior will make the vehicle more enjoyable to drive and increase its value at resale.

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## Self-driving cars could be the future of travel

The electronics and computer-driven features of modern automobiles continue to evolve at a rapid pace. Until now, however, most of these features have been manually employed. But the self-driving car, once a concept reserved only for science fiction, may make driving even more passive in the near future, with some slated to hit showrooms as early as 2017.

Google, as a pioneer of some of the more advanced self-driving automobile technologies, says that computer-navigated cars are safer than manually operated automobiles. But will the public embrace such vehicles? Autonomous cars are already being operated in California, Nevada, Florida and certain areas within the United Kingdom.

At the 2013 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Toyota and Audi unveiled their prototypes to sell to regular car buyers, while Ford and Mercedes-Benz are working on their own self-driving technology.

Legislation within the United States has already paved the way for autonomous cars to be tested on private roads. Once these cars are made available to the public, legislators will begin the task of revising driving laws and may need to reconsider how drivers earn their licenses.

Although the technology differs depending on the manufacturer, in the Google autonomous vehicle, a number of components are working in concert to enable the vehicle to move safely. At the heart of the system is a laser range finder mounted on the roof of the car.

This laser generates a detailed 3D map of the environment. The car then combines these laser measurements with established high-resolution maps of the world.

The vehicle also employs other sensors in its technology. Radars mounted on the front and rear bumpers enable the car to detect its surroundings. Cameras detect traffic lights, while

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