



Car Maintenance

A quick check over of your car each week, especially if it has not been used for a while, is a great idea to ensure you have a safe journey.

An important element of owning a car is making sure it is in peak condition. Here are some small and easy car maintenance tips that you can do to help your parents next time you go for a drive or a road trip. Remember that all cars are different and that some of these elements may not apply to your vehicle. Be sure to check the handbook for your car, which is often found in the glovebox as a guide. Tie long hair back so that it doesn't get the way.

You will need:

- Car
- Handbook/manual
- Tyre pressure gauge
- Old cloth or paper
- Water, in a bottle or jug (optional)
- Wiper fluid/additive (optional)
- Engine oil (optional)



Safety first: Always ensure that the car has its hand-brake on, engine is off, and is parked in a safe location, like in a driveway or on a less busy street. If the car is parked on a hill, you may need to put a chock or brick on the downhill side of the wheel, to prevent the car from rolling.

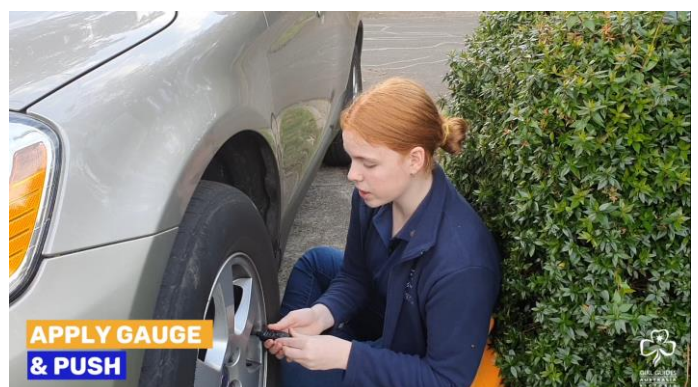
Tyre pressure: Tyre pressures for the car's types is very important, as this is the only contact point between the car and the road. Correct tyre pressure ensures the brakes work correctly to stop the car, and means that the tyres have enough air in them to make your ride a smooth one. It also helps the tyres wear evenly. The flatter the tyre gets, the more petrol you will need in your car. If it is over inflated, the brakes won't work as well.



1. Start by checking what the pressure should be. The ideal pressure for your car's tyres will be listed on the driver's side doorframe, or in the handbook. It will be listed in PSI – pounds per square inch.



2. Make sure the tyres are cold (that is, make sure your car hasn't been driven for a while or very far), as hot tyres increase the pressure.
3. To check the pressure, remove the valve cap and attach a tyre gauge. This will tell you the pressure. Most service stations have an air station where you can also check the tyre pressure. Ask an adult to drive you.



4. If the pressure is too low, inflate the tyre to the correct pressure at a petrol station.

Tyre tread: The thickness of the rubber on the tyre is important for traction and breaking, especially when it's wet. The car is not road-worthy if there is insufficient rubber on the tyres, and this can be dangerous. At least 3mm of tread is recommended.

1. Tyres have a "wear-mark" indicator, which is a small mound of rubber in the tread of a tyre. This shows the amount of tread left on the tyre.
2. Locate the wear-mark.
3. Check if the tread of the tyre is above this mark. If it is at the level or below, your car needs new tyres.



Engine oils: Engine oils help to keep the moving parts in an engine working smoothly by reducing the friction of the moving parts.

1. Make sure the engine hasn't been running and is on a flat surface. Otherwise the indication of the oil levels may be inaccurate.



2. A cloth, towel, or old rag will come in handy for this.
3. Pop the bonnet of your car, then find the dipstick and remove it. The dipstick should be near the engine block, and is used to check the oil level in the engine.
4. Wipe the dipstick on the cloth, towel, or rag to remove any oil.
5. Return the dipstick, and pull it out again. This should now indicate how much oil is in the engine. Marks on the end of the dipstick will indicate if the engine needs more oil.



6. If the oil is too low, ask an adult to help fill it up. Engine oils have specific viscosities (thickness), so check the handbook to know which oil is best for your car.
7. Once the oil level is checked, return the dipstick.



Fluids: The other fluids in the engine that should be checked are the radiator and the windscreen wiper. The radiator fluids help to cool the engine when it is running. Low levels of radiator fluids can cause the engine to overheat.

1. For the **radiator fluids**, check the handbook to find the fluid reservoir. It's generally towards the front of the engine, to the side.
2. On the reservoir, there will be two level indicators: a minimum (min) and a maximum (max). The fluid should be between these two marks.
3. If the fluid is too low (below the min mark), add some water when the engine is cool.



4. For the **windscreen wiper fluids**, check the handbook to find the wiper reservoir/container. It is usually marked with a wiper symbol on the top.



5. Check the fluid level by looking at the container. It should be between min and max.
6. If the fluid level is too low, ask an adult to help you add a mix of water and windscreen wiper fluid. This fluid often has chemicals to it to help clean the windscreen.

