

## Weekly Vehicle Checks

Looking after your vehicle should be at the forefront of your mind. For most people it's the 2<sup>nd</sup> most expensive asset you will have. Keeping your car well maintained and safe to drive means that you are less likely to pose a danger to yourself, passengers, pedestrians and other road users and it will also reduce the amount of pollution and fuel you use. Simple vehicle maintenance should be carried out at least once a week and it's a good idea to find and keep your owner's manual to hand for reference and or use our simple check sheet. Regards Tony Farndale

### 1) Washing and Cleaning Your Car:

Apart from making your car look better, this is especially important in winter, to ensure that the windows, lights and door mirrors are clean. Driving with a restricted view makes you a danger to pedestrians and other road-users and is punishable with a £1000 fine. Also remember on days when your vehicle is covered with snow to remove it from the roof and lights.

Cleaning your car also gives you a chance to check for damage on the bodywork and windscreen. In winter this is particularly important as water can get into chips, then when the temperatures drop and the water freezes, it expands, and can cause your windscreen to crack. So as the man says on the television get chips fixed.

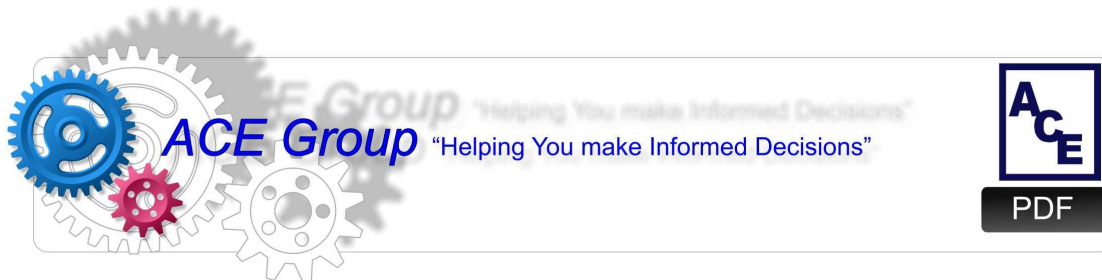
Check the mirrors are attached and correctly adjusted.

### 2) Check and Top up Fluid Levels:

You should always keep enough fuel in your car for the journey ahead, so do the same with all the other fluids and keep them above the minimum level. Brake fluids, clutch fluid if fitted, engine oil and engine coolants and windscreen washer fluid I am sorry to report don't top themselves up, and if they drop below the minimum required amount it can be dangerous and expensive with some of these fluids so you need to get used to doing the checks and level adjustment on a regular basis.

### 3) Checking the Tyres for damage:

When checking your tyres you need to check the pressure and for any visible damage to the tyres and walls, and tread depth must be the legal requirement currently 1.6mm over the centre 2/3 of the tyre. Check for any bulges or white patches, both would need immediate attention. Remember this piece of rubber is the only thing between your car and the road. The minimum legal tread depth in the UK is 1.6mm although most experts believe that this figure is too low and it should be 3mm, which improves the stopping distance substantially. The deeper the tread the more grip you have. If your tyres are worn below 1.6mm tread and the police stop you, you could face a 3-point penalty and £2,500 fine per tyre currently and even loss of your driving license. So don't risk it. Don't forget your spare tyre either. You never know when you might need it and it is a legal requirement for your spare tyre to be roadworthy, whether you are using it or not. Don't forget to check the pressure.



#### **4) Checking Tyre Pressure:**

Your owner's manual will provide you with the recommended pressure for your tyres - both front and rear (sometimes these will be different depending on the type of car you drive). You may need to identify the size e.g. 295/35/21 its written on the sidewall. Pressure should be taken when the tyres are cold, so leave the vehicle standing for at least an hour before checking.

The pressures are important for fuel economy and tyre safety. If your tyre pressure is outside that recommended by the manufacturer, you could suffer from handling and maneuvering issues as well as excessive wear and damage to your tyres. If you have to add air regularly to get your tyres to the correct pressure, you should go and have them checked by a tyre specialist, as you may have some sort of damage or at least a leak needing attention.

#### **5) Lights:**

Check that all lights are working and are undamaged including headlights, sidelights, indicators and fog lights, if bulbs need replacing either fit the bulb or take it and have it done. If an electrical item is not working 1<sup>st</sup> check your fuses make sure all your dashboard indications (such as petrol warning light, oil warning light etc) are working.

#### **6) Windscreen Wipers and Washer Fluid:**

Make sure that your washer fluid bottle is full and in winter add an additive to help with cleaning and keep the bottle free from freezing. Don't use washing up liquid as it can smear and lather too much and can block the screen washers if you use too much. Use a proper washer solution, which can be bought quite cheaply from supermarkets, garages and car accessory shops. Make sure that the wiper blades are clean and don't drag across the windscreen causing a poor sweep pattern. If there are lines or streaks across the window when you operate the wipers, then lift the wiper and clean the blade by wiping it with a cloth soaked in windscreen washer solution. If that doesn't work, it's time to replace the blade(s).

#### **7) Exhaust:**

Check that your exhaust sounds normal, and if there are any strange or unfamiliar noises, then get it checked out by a garage, as this can be an indication of a more serious problem or impending failure.