

12-point car check saves time, money



AAA Michigan

The 12-point car check can be done at home if you're equipped with the owner's manual, a wire brush, a tire pressure gauge, a screwdriver, an antifreeze hydrometer and baking soda.

A FEW household tools and a half hour of spare time could save motorists from inconvenient breakdowns and costly auto repair bills this winter. AAA Michigan reports.

"By performing a simple 12-point car care checkup, motorists can avoid many of the problems a typical Michigan car owner experiences in winter," said Paul Gliessman, AAA Michigan Emergency Road Service manager.

"For example, last year our Emergency Road Service crew assisted 884,870 motorists, with nearly half involving jump starts."

For those car owners doing the 12-point check at home, the only items required are the owner's manual, a wire brush, a tire pressure gauge, a screwdriver, an antifreeze hydrometer and baking soda.

THE FOLLOWING items should be checked:

- **Battery** — Dip a wire brush in a baking soda and water solution and scrub the battery terminals and cable ends. Do not splash the solution on painted surfaces. If the battery is not maintenance-free, make sure water is at the correct level.

- **Antifreeze** — Check the radiator's antifreeze strength with a hydrometer to make sure it's about 36 degrees below zero. The level of antifreeze in the overflow tank should also be checked.

- **Brake fluid** — Pry off the chamber's cover clips with a screwdriver if necessary, or just screw off the cap on some of the newer models. Keep the fluid level within one-quarter inch from the top of the reservoir. New models have translucent reservoirs and can be checked visually.

- **Oil** — Check level with dipstick. Add oil as needed. Check owner's manual for exact intervals between changes and for SAE viscosity grade.

- **Power steering fluid** — Follow directions in owner's manual when checking the indicator stick. Add fluid slowly to avoid overfilling.

- **Automatic transmission fluid** — Check the indicator stick, usually located behind the engine on the passenger side. Make sure the car is on level ground and placed in "park" with the engine running when doing the check.

- **Tires** — Check tire pressure with a gauge for correct inflation and inspect tread wear. For accuracy, check inflation pressures when the tires are cold, after a car has been sitting for three hours or more.

- **Belts and hoses** — Press on the middle of each belt to test tension. Tighten or replace belts that give more than 1 to 1 1/2 inches. Check for cracks and fraying and be sure hoses are firmly in place. Replace as needed.

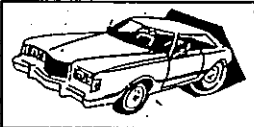
- **Lights, signals** — Activate them to make sure they work.

- **Air filter** — Hold the filter up to a light. Replace it if you can't see the light through it.

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IT'S THE season of apple cider, falling leaves and school bells.

But it's also time to start giving serious thought to something often taken for granted: your car.

Noises are a clue that something's wrong with your car. Squealing brakes mean worn brake pads. Sudden screeching under the hood signifies a worn loose drive belt. Knocking or ping might announce it's the time for a tuneup.

To help get you in the proper spirit to fine-tune your trusted buggy before Old Man Winter roars in, we've put together this handy fall car care guide, appearing today in all 13 Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

It's chock full of informative and just plain interesting facts about the world of auto care.

From finding a good mechanic to doing repairs yourself, you'll find useful tips here.

We're happy to be of service!

— Bob Sklar
assistant managing editor

Bob Sklar coordinated this special section. Glenn Merrill, O&E creative services supervisor, designed the cover. O&E representatives Bob Dodd and Laura Verrast coordinated advertising. Direct queries to Bob Sklar: 591-2300, extension 313.

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