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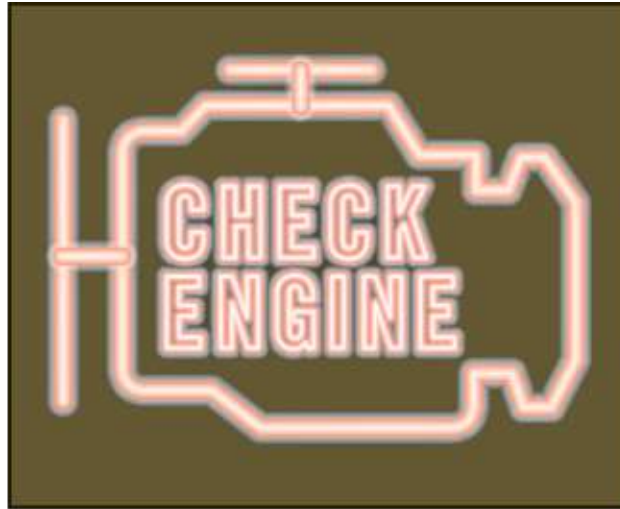


# 6 reasons for a check engine light

Modern vehicles utilize various technologies to ensure drivers remain as safe as possible behind the wheel. Technology also can alert drivers when their cars are in need of examination, and such is the case when the often dreaded “check engine” light comes on.

While a check engine indicator is seldom good news, it may not mean that expensive repairs are right around the corner. The following are six reasons why check engine lights come on and how to remedy these situations.

1. Faulty/loose gas cap: A faulty gas cap is one of the reasons a check engine light might



turn on. A cap that is not tightly closed or one that is poorly sealed enables vapors to escape, which can trigger the light. Opening the gas cap and

then resealing it tightly may help; otherwise, a replacement cap may be necessary.

2. Faulty sensor: Sometimes there is

nothing wrong with the engine or other components, but the light sensor itself. The check engine light might come on because its sensor is corroded or not working properly.

3. Oxygen sensor failure: The oxygen sensor sends data to the vehicle’s computer, which it uses to create the right mix of air and fuel to enter the engine’s cylinders. The check engine light may come on when the sensor fails or registers a problem with the fuel/air mix.

4. Ignition coils/spark plugs: A check engine light may come on to warn drivers it is time to replace spark plugs and/

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# What to expect from EV charger installation

Amid the nearly 285 million vehicles on the road, there are now 1.7 million electric cars in operation in the United States, according to Experian. That figure only stands to grow as tax incentives, environmental perks and other benefits to driving electric vehicles expand.

Now that more EVs are on the roadways, drivers need ready access to charging stations to power their rides. Although there has been an influx in stations available in shopping centers and rest stops, nothing beats the convenience of an EV charger at home.

There are things homeowners need to know about EV charger installation. EV charger installation is a job best left to a qualified electrician because of its complexity.

There are three EV chargers available today: level one, level two and level three. The higher the number, the faster the charging and the more energy required. According to PC Mag, most home installations involve level two chargers. Compared to level one, which plugs into a standard wall outlet (120V) and can take 10 hours or more to charge a vehicle, level two cuts that charging time in half.

Due to the extra energy draw, level two chargers often require adjustments to a home's electrical system, which likely will include installing dedicated circuits and outlets.

New York State Charge NY says that level two chargers use higher voltage between 108 and 240V. They can provide around 20 miles of range in an hour, and after three to six hours most EVs are fully charged.

MotorTrend magazine says most homeowners will spend between \$1,150 and \$2,750 to purchase and install a level two charging station. Qmerit, a nationwide specialist in installing EV charging equipment, says the charger itself can cost between \$350 and \$750, and the installation varies depending on the electrician. If extensive work needs to be done to the electrical panel, particularly in older homes with outdated circuitry, it can cost more. Replacing wires also may require working with a local utility company, which extends the installation timeline. It is wise to be prepared for such circumstances.

When shopping for an EV charger, consider these features.

- Choose a cord that is 20 feet in length or longer



for greatest flexibility and reach, whether in the garage or outside. Also, if a future EV has a charging port in a different location than a current vehicle, a longer cord will reach it.

- Ensure the chargers are UL- or ETL-certified, which means they meet industry safety standards.

- Consider whether Wi-Fi connectivity is desired. Smart chargers can track energy usage or allow you to program charging times remotely.

- Having the charger hardwired could be a smart idea. Qmerit recommends hardwiring all

wall chargers to prevent nuisance tripping, which occurs when a ground-fault circuit-interrupting breaker on both the electrical system and charger can cause the circuit breaker to cut power unnecessarily.

- Do your homework to find a reputable electrician who will be qualified to install an EV charging station. Choose an electrician who will pull permits and do load calculations to ensure everything is in compliance with local codes.

EV charging stations can be installed at home for convenience and faster charging times.



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# Performance issues that can affect older cars

Modern cars have much longer life spans than one may expect. Not too long ago, drivers often commemorated the milestone of their vehicles reaching the 100,000-mile mark. However, data from Car and Driver indicates the average vehicle now lasts around 12 years or roughly 200,000 miles. More advanced electric or hybrid vehicles may be able to go even further, with some capable of reaching as much as 300,000 miles.

According to a 2006 report from Consumer Reports, vehicles made in Japan and Korea have fewer problems per 100 vehicles than those made by American and European manufacturers, making them tops in vehicle longevity.

Thanks to advancements in technology,



cars are more durable than ever, but that doesn't make them impervious to breakdowns or the need for repairs. A recent report from AAA found that more than two-thirds of service calls were for vehicles a decade or older. Here's a look at some of the problems that can af-

fect older vehicles.

### Battery

The average car battery lasts between three and five years, according to Auto Zone. Batteries tend to show signs of wear at the four-year mark on average. Corrosion or dirt on battery terminals also can affect battery performance.

### Electrical system

Electrical system issues can be caused by anything from burnt out car fuses to bad or faulty electrical connections and contacts. Corroded or loose screws, nuts and wires can cause electrical issues, which may be more common in older

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# ISSUES

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vehicles that have significant mileage on them.

## Suspension

The suspension system is comprised of springs, tires, shock absorbers, struts, anti-sway bars, and other parts that connect the vehicle to the wheels. Suspension systems regulate the amount of bouncing in the vehicle while on the road and make it manageable. Eventually, all suspen-

sion systems can and will wear out, and parts will need to be serviced or replaced.

## Evaporative emissions

The evaporative system consists of a network of hoses, canisters and valves. It helps vent pressure in the gas tank. An older vehicle may end up with a cracked hose that can cause a fuel leak. Hoses also may be compromised elsewhere in vehicles, so these points should be checked during routine maintenance.

## Braking system

As with other moving parts on a car, the brake system wears down over time and parts will need to be replaced. Squealing, squeaking or a soft brake pedal are indicative of braking system issues and should be looked at by a mechanic promptly.

## Obsolete components

Modern vehicles are increasingly being controlled by computers. These computers handle a variety of features,

including navigation and pairing to mobile phones, among others. Over time, systems may no longer work if there are no computer updates available. That means Bluetooth pairing may no longer function, or maps may not be current for GPS systems.

Cars and trucks have longer life spans due to technological advancements. However, age is still a factor in the deterioration of different vehicle systems.

# LIGHT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

or ignition coils. According to DigitalTrends, ignition coils generate the electricity needed for spark plugs to ignite the fuel and air mix in the cylinders. Worn coils or fouled plugs can cause any number of issues, including engine mis-

fire.

5. Catalytic converter issues: The catalytic convertor heats up hydrocarbons and other emissions so that they turn into carbon dioxide and water vapor to help protect the environment, offers AutoZone. The converter usually does not fail on its own, but a mechanic can help diagnose what might

cause the failure.

6. Electronic powertrain controls: Vehicles are large computerized devices with an array of sensors and modules that run powertrains. Any issues with these sensors, networks or modules can trigger the check engine light.

Depending on the make and model of a vehicle, a check engine

light may require less urgency than a flashing light. It always helps to consult with the owner's manual to help determine issues. Automotive retail stores and mechanics can connect the car's computer to diagnostic equipment that will issue a diagnostic trouble code (DTC) that can serve as a starting point to address check engine light issues.

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# The basics of auto insurance

Traffic laws are designed to keep everyone on the road as safe as possible. That motivation also is behind laws governing auto insurance, which is required in Canada and the vast majority of American states.

## What is auto insurance?

Auto insurance is something that most drivers have but very few, if any, hope to use. According to Insure.com, car insurance is an agreement between the policy holder and an insurance company which protects the individual against financial loss if the vehicle is stolen or involved in an accident. The Insurance Information Institute says auto insurance provides property, liability and medical coverage. Property coverage covers damage or replacement of the vehicle. Liability coverage is for the policy holder's legal responsibility to others for bodily injury or property damage. Medical coverage pays for the cost of treating injuries, rehabilitation and sometimes even funeral expenses or lost wages.

## Compulsory vs. mandatory coverage

Depending on where a policy holder lives, there are certain coverages that are compulsory, or mandatory coverages that are the minimum amounts required by



law. Optional coverages also can be purchased to suit one's needs. Compulsory coverage may vary based on location, driver's age, type of vehicle, and type of financing on that vehicle. It is best to discuss coverages with an automotive insurance agent to figure out which types of coverage will be needed and to get a price quote. The six basic kinds of coverage include:

- bodily injury liability
- personal injury protection
- property damage liability
- collision
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## Premiums vary

Insurance typically is sold with deductibles, according to the III. Policy holders may opt for higher deductibles so they can lower their premium costs. Additional factors that will affect the cost of coverage include driver's age, driving record and location where the vehicle is housed or used. Credit score and gender also may affect premiums. Defensive driving courses and protecting the vehicle with anti-theft devices may help lower premiums.

Auto insurance costs vary by a significant amount, so it is a good idea to shop around and

compare quotes. Bundling of auto insurance with other policies, such as homeowners insurance or umbrella policies, may help reduce rates.

## Getting insurance

To obtain an insurance policy, the agent will need the year, make and model of the vehicle being insured. For the most accurate price quote, the VIN number will be needed.

To buy auto insurance, one needs to be the registered owner of the car. Some states allow dependent and independent drivers to own a car in their own names at age 16 or 17. Some parents opt to combine insurance coverage for their teenagers because the premiums may be cheaper. Teenagers tend to be riskier in the eyes of insurance companies due to their lack of experience and perceived recklessness. Those factors are reflected in premium costs.

Insurance is something every driver should have. Motorists can explore their options to find policies that fit their needs and budgets.



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# How to identify a vehicle that fits you

Buying a vehicle is a significant financial investment. It is not a decision to take lightly, especially given the historically high prices of new cars in recent years.

Finding a vehicle that is the perfect fit requires consideration of a host of variables, including personal preference. What is perfect for one individual may not work for another. When the time comes to shop for a new car, people can ask themselves a few questions in an effort to find a vehicle that best suits their needs.

· What are your needs? Are you looking to car-pool the kids to and from school or do you want a car for commuting that will not cost you an arm and a leg in fuel? Identifying the main purpose of the vehicle will eliminate certain cars or trucks right off the bat.

· What is your budget? It is a good idea to get a pre-approval loan statement from a financial provider to figure out what you can afford to pay for a vehicle. The popular automotive resource Edmunds says the general rule is the monthly new-car payment should not exceed 15 percent of your monthly take-home pay. Lease payments should be less than 10 percent of monthly take-home pay. Calculate these numbers and potential interest



rates prior to shopping for a vehicle.

· What size is best for you? Even though it may seem that SUVs and pickups reign supreme on the road, some drivers prefer smaller vehicles. Figure out how much interior space and cargo room you need. Take the time to sit in different vehicle classes to determine which size fits you best.


· What are your fuel

preferences? Today's vehicles come in electric, unleaded gasoline, diesel, and hybrid options. How the car or truck is powered may be important to you and will help identify the best vehicle for you.

· What is the cost of ownership? Certain vehicle brands may be more expensive to maintain than others. According to Motor1.com, luxury


and premium brands are typically the most expensive to maintain, with European brands like BMW, Porsche and Mercedes-Benz typically carrying high maintenance costs. This can be prohibitive when parts or service is needed.

Buying a vehicle requires careful consideration of drivers' needs, budget and desired features.



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# What certain noises may indicate about your car

Automobiles have come a long way since their introduction more than 100 years ago. Though modern cars and trucks still employ some of the same principles as their forebears, the vehicles people drive today bear little resemblance to those that made waves in the early part of the twentieth century.

Modern automobiles are technological marvels, which has made both driving and maintaining a vehicle much simpler. In regard to maintenance, built-in diagnostic systems can now alert drivers when something is wrong with their vehicles. Though that feature is undeniably useful, drivers can still benefit from learn-

ing to recognize issues by ear. Many issues that can affect a car or truck produce unusual sounds, and learning what certain noises may indicate can help drivers detect problems as soon as possible.

· **Rattling sound in a wheel well:** Most people have mistakenly placed clothing in a dryer without realizing they had spare change in their pockets. That mistake is immediately apparent once the dryer starts thanks to the unpleasant noise of coins bouncing off the interior of the machine. Drivers may hear a similar sound when behind the wheel and wonder what's behind it. Such a sound is often indicative that there's a


loose lug nut inside the hubcap. This issue can arise when drivers don't tighten the wheel properly after changing their own tire, or if mechanics make the same mistake when rotating or replacing tires during a routine maintenance session.

· **Squeaking sound:** The auto insurance experts at Geico® note that rear-wheel or four-wheel drive vehicles may produce a rhythmic squeaking sound when an issue arises with the universal joint. JD Power notes that the universal joint, often referred to as a U-joint, is part of the system that enables the rotating crankshaft in the engine of a vehicle to transfer that rotating motion to the rear wheels. U-joints

get a workout whenever vehicles are driven, so they require maintenance, and a squeaking sound is one indicator that the U-joint needs to be addressed immediately.

· **Squealing sound:** A high-pitched squealing sound is typically indicative of worn out brake pads. However, Cars.com notes that if such a sound is only present when a car is first driven in the morning, it could just be surface rust being scraped off the rotors. After a few initial applications of the brakes, that sound might disappear. If it doesn't, the vehicle will likely need new brake pads.

· **Scraping on the**  
See **NOISES** on Page 9



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# NOISES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

windshield during rain: The scraping sound on a windshield when the wipers are in use should not be taken lightly or be interpreted as a sign that the rain is only falling slightly. In fact, that sound indicates the wipers are worn out, which means they're not effectively clearing the windshield. In addition, the wipers could be scratching the windshield each time they produce this sound, ultimately necessitating a costly windshield replacement. Wiper blades can be replaced in a matter of minutes, so address this issue promptly.

Learning to recognize the culprits behind various vehicle noises can help drivers nip problems in the bud before they compromise the automobile and the safety of the people inside it.

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# Terms to know when buying a car

Buying a new car is no small task. When shopping for a new car, it's easy to let details like the color of the vehicle and creature comforts like connectivity take control of the transaction, but buyers also know how important the bottom line can be.

Next to a home, a car might be the most expensive item many consumers ever purchase. In fact, according to Cox Automotive, the average transaction price of a new vehicle in the United States in early 2023 was just over \$48,000. A lot of money changes hands at car dealerships every day, so buyers can undoubtedly benefit from learning or re-learning the lingo that



surrounds such transactions.

· Annual percentage rate (APR): The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau notes that APR is the cost consumers

pay each year to borrow money. This includes fees and buyers should know that APR is different from the interest rate. Drivers can negotiate a lower APR, and the

CFPB notes that it can benefit buyers to compare the APR on competing auto loans.

· Balloon payment: The balloon payment is a large sum that is due at the end of some auto loans. Many drivers will pay a predetermined amount each month during the terms of the loan. Once that loan reaches maturity, they then own the car outright. With a balloon loan, buyers still make monthly payments, but when the loan reaches maturity they must make a balloon payment in order to take full ownership of the vehicle.

· Capitalized cost reduction: The online financial resource Investopedia notes that a capitalized cost reduction is any upfront payment that reduces the cost of financing. This can include a cash down payment and a trade-in vehicle.

· Closed-end lease: Individuals considering leasing their next vehicle will likely come across this term. Car and Driver notes that a closed-end lease is one that gives the driver leasing the vehicle the

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See **TERMS** on Page 13

# How to protect your vehicle's paint job

Drivers go to great lengths to ensure what's under the hood of their vehicles is well taken care of. But it's equally beneficial to tend to the exterior of a vehicle, including its paint job.

According to Popular Mechanics, oxidation can adversely affect iron-based metals. That can put vehicles in jeopardy and take significant time off their life expectancy. The good news is that rust and other issues that can affect a vehicle's paint job and appearance are typically avoidable. That should be music to the ears of new vehicle owners, who likely need no reminder of the sizable financial investment required to drive off the lot with a fresh set of wheels. Drivers who want their cars and trucks to maintain their looks over the long haul can consider



these simple strategies to protect their paint jobs.

- Make car washes part of your vehicle maintenance routine. Seasoned drivers are undoubtedly familiar with the conventional wisdom surrounding oil change intervals, but those same motorists may not recognize the importance of routine

car washes. Over time, contaminants such as pollen, dust and pollution can settle on a vehicle's exterior, potentially jeopardizing the paint job. Routine car washes can prevent such damage and help a car look like it was just driven off the lot.

- Wax the exterior of the vehicle. The automo-

tive experts at Carfax® report that waxing is a significant and simple way to protect vehicle paint. Carfax® notes that certain paste waxes contain mild abrasives that help remove fine scratches from painted surfaces. Wax also can protect paint jobs from fading related to exposure to ultraviolet rays. That's especially noteworthy for drivers who do not routinely park their cars in a garage.

- Use a car cover. Car covers may or may not be practical for cars drivers use every day, but they are an effective way to protect a paint job from the elements. Drivers who have a spare car they rarely drive or even those who do not drive their primary vehicle a lot each day can purchase a universal-fit

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# How should EV drivers choose the right tires?

(BPT) - Drivers have never been more charged up about electric vehicles, but there's an important factor many don't know about - choosing the right tires for EVs.

Electric vehicle sales in the United States doubled in 2023, according to J.D. Power. As a growing number of drivers enter the EV market, those consumers should also know that EVs come with unique challenges where the rubber meets the road.

Electric vehicles need tires that will help keep noise levels low. And their heavier weights and quick acceleration require tires that can withstand larger loads and more intense torque - all while delivering an efficient driving experience that gets the most out of each charge.

Global tiremaker Nokian Tyres has been testing tires on electric vehicles for more than a decade, and every tire they make comes with an Electric Fit marking that certifies it's a seamless fit for EVs. As a leader in EV tire innovation, the company says drivers should look for the following four factors when choosing replacement tires that will help them get the most out of their EVs.

## Weight

Electric vehicles are



as much as 30% heavier than their internal combustion engine counterparts, according to The University of Tennessee's Center for Transportation Research. Their heavy battery packs mean tires have to be sturdier.

The added weight can cause the wrong tires to stop too slowly, wear too quickly and struggle on challenging surfaces, such as rain or wintry precipitation. Tire-makers seek to account for the heavier load by constructing tires with heavier-duty materials and formulating rubber compounds to be more responsive to the road.

## Noise

While EVs are making a lot of noise in the automotive market, their engines are virtually silent. The main sound drivers notice in the cabin is the noise of tires touching the road. Tire manufacturers seek to mitigate noise frequencies by using tread patterns, rubber compounds and materials that dampen sound waves.

Nokian Tyres inserts acoustic foam into its dedicated EV winter products, the Nokian Tyres Hakkapeliitta 10 EV and R5 EV. Other tire-makers are making similar strides to cut down on cabin noise and deliver a peaceful driving experience

that matches the smooth and silent nature of EVs.

## Torque

Electric vehicles are powerful - Car and Driver reports that many can accelerate from zero to 60 mph in fewer than five seconds. That extra torque presents an extra challenge to tires, since rapid changes in speed can cause them to wear more quickly.

Drivers should pursue tires that can withstand that torque and deliver grip that maximizes their vehicles' acceleration power. The key: tread patterns and rubber compounds that balance durability and responsive-

See **TIRES** on Page 13

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# TIRES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12  
ness.

## Range

Range anxiety is real. Numerous studies indicate that uncertain or low driving range per charge is one of the biggest barriers to entry for drivers who choose not to purchase an EV. Tires help deliver more efficient, predictable range per charge. The key: lowering rolling resistance, which is the amount of energy required to propel a vehicle along the road at a constant speed.

How do tiremakers lower the rolling resistance of their tires? Design plays a big role. According to Nokian Tyres,

a tire's sidewall construction, tread pattern and rubber compound play a role in reducing rolling resistance. More than 90% of Nokian Tyres' products rank in the lowest categories of rolling resistance because the tire manufacturer prioritizes energy efficiency.

There's little point in buying electric vehicles without also seeking tires designed to unlock their benefits. Nokian Tyres recommends tires that are tailored to handle EVs' weight, noise levels, torque and range requirements. The result: a supercharged driving experience.

For more recommendations about EV tires, visit [NokianTires.com/EVs](http://NokianTires.com/EVs).

# PAINT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

car cover or a premium cover designed specifically for their vehicles. Car covers protect paint jobs from ultraviolet rays and the elements and may reduce the need for more frequent trips to the car wash.

· Park in the shade, but choose spots wisely. Parking in the shade may protect vehicles from the ultraviolet rays of the sun, but it's important that drivers pick the right shady spot to park their cars and trucks. A shade tree might seem like a great ally to vehicle owners, but if birds nest or rest in the tree, drivers

could be exposing their cars to bird droppings. That's no small threat, as bird droppings are high in uric acid, which quickly damage a vehicle's exterior. Parking directly beneath a tree also might expose the paint job to sap or fallen leaves or berries, each of which can adversely affect vehicle exteriors. If you plan to park in the shade to protect the paint job, ideally choose a spot that is not directly beneath the tree.

A well-maintained paint job can improve the appearance and life expectancy of a vehicle, which is something drivers should keep in mind as they hope to get the most out of their automotive investment.

# TERMS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

option to buy it at a set price at the end of the term or walk away without any financial liability (damage or modifications to the vehicle upon returning it may result in charges). Leases typically are closed-end, but it's still best that drivers confirm that prior to signing on the dotted line.

· Dealer preparation fees: The lending experts at Capital One note that dealer preparation fees are the charges a deal-

ership issues to prepare a car for transfer to the buyer. These fees might cover the cost of washing the vehicle and additional services before buyers take it off the lot. Capital One notes these fees average between \$100 and \$500, and buyers should know that they are negotiable.

· Extended warranty: Car and Driver warns that most extended warranties offered by dealerships cover very little, so buyers should read the terms carefully before purchasing an extended warranty. Extended warranties of-

ferred by manufacturers tend to be more useful to buyers.

· MSRP: This familiar acronym stands for "Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price." The MSRP is the total of the base price plus all of the options listed on the window sticker of the vehicle.

· Prepayment penalties: Prepayment penalties penalize drivers for paying off a loan before it reaches maturity. Though the vast majority of drivers who finance the purchase of a vehicle will not have prepayment penalties

in their agreements, buyers with lower credit scores might. Anyone with such a penalty in the terms of their agreement should try to negotiate it out of the deal.

· Term: The term refers to the length of the purchase or lease agreement. Many leases feature terms between 12 and 36 months, while purchase agreements can feature terms as long as 72 months (six years).

Knowing the lingo before buying a new car can increase the chances drivers get a good deal on their next vehicle.



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# Road-tested tips for a trip to remember

Passageways have been traversed for as long as there has been modes of transportation to get people from Point A to Point B. Although America's westward expansion spurred on by the Louisiana Purchase wasn't a road trip for pleasure, travelers were seeking a better way of life and the quest for land and riches, ultimately traveling thousands of miles in such pursuits.

Today, putting miles between oneself and home is a largely recreational pursuit. Road trips can be enjoyable ways to get close-up views of notable sights. When planned correctly, road trips can be affordable vacation options.

## Establish a road trip budget

Even if a road trip is a frugal way to travel, it's



important to set a budget for how much you'll be spending on the road and at various points of interest. A budget can help you decide how far you can go and which types of accommodations to seek.

## Schedule a vehicle maintenance appointment

Be sure to schedule a pre-trip appointment at the service center to give your vehicle a once-over. Change the oil if necessary, have fluids topped off, check the cooling or heating system, and get the tires inspected/ro-

tated. Also, build a road trip toolkit in case of any emergencies or breakdowns.

## Take frequent breaks

Even if you think you don't need to, pull off at a rest stop to walk around, stretch and use

See **TRIP** on Page 15

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# Did you know?

Fully functional headlights are an important safety feature on cars and trucks. While halogen bulbs were common in the past, modern vehicles now largely utilize high intensity discharge (HID) bulbs or light-emitting diodes (LEDs). HIDs work similarly to fluorescent bulbs by passing an electric current through an inert gas in a glass cylinder. LEDs are semiconductors that emit light when powered by an electric current. LEDs and HIDs are now used because they are efficient and last longer. These headlights quickly replaced halogen bulbs as the industry standard, but many drivers have lamented that they are increasingly feeling blinded by headlight glare. In March 2020, the Ford Motor Company recalled several F-150s because their headlights

were too bright. According to Donut Media, an American automotive content brand, the typical halogen bulb puts out 1,300 lumens of light and the average LED emits 1,600 lumens. But HIDs can emit up to 3,000 lumens. Popular Science magazine also says HID and LED headlights are a different color temperature than halogens. These newer lights put out whiter and bluer light. Human eyes are very sensitive to blue light, so these blue-white bulbs automatically seem brighter even when they're not emitting more lumens, according to PowerBulbs reports. Headlights also are supposed to be positioned correctly at a certain angle to reduce blinding glare. People who replace their own bulbs may not be doing so correctly.

# TRIP

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

the restroom. If the next rest stop is far away, you won't be uncomfortable waiting to reach it. Various smartphone apps list what's available at each highway exit as well as rest stops nearby to help you plan accordingly.

### Be smart about food and drink

If you have to stop for a meal, visit a grocery store instead of restaurants and fast food, as they offer healthier, less expensive options. Supermarkets also have restrooms and seating areas. If you're bringing along food, pack a cooler with frozen water bottles that can keep the food cold. As the water bottles melt, you will have access to drinks without having to compromise on cargo room.

### Establish a special road trip treat

Plan something that

you only enjoy on road trips. This can be an expensive package of chocolates, or dining out at a restaurant chain you don't have closer to home. It can enhance the anticipation and enjoyment of the long ride.

### Download favorite songs, podcasts and more

Downloading ensures access to the songs and additional entertainment you desire without having to worry if a cellular connection is spotty. Take turns alternating between tunes, audiobooks, movies, and even stand up comedy specials to help pass the time. Also, bring paper maps as backups to GPS systems.

### Utilize coupon sites

Get on sites like Groupon to figure out what to do locally and grab deals in the process.

Road trips are enjoyable options for family or individual travel. Certain tips can make the ride go smoothly.



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# When should you replace rotors and brake pads?

The ability to accelerate and steer freely is vital to vehicle performance. Equally crucial is being able to stop the car to avoid collisions and obstacles. Brake pads and rotors are vital components of braking mechanisms that need to be maintained and serviced.

Drivers may wonder how frequently they have to replace brake parts. Car and Driver magazine states brake pads are among the most crucial braking components. Brake pads create the friction that helps stop a car when they are pressed against the brake rotor, also known as the brake disc. It's in drivers' best interests to ensure that brake pads, as well as rotors, always function properly and are replaced before their effectiveness is compromised.

## Replacing brake pads

Brake pads are made



from different materials, but all will wear down over time, losing a portion of material every time the brakes are used. Eventually brake pads will not be able to generate enough friction to stop the vehicle quickly. Industry experts generally recommend brakes be replaced every 20,000 to 60,000 miles. Since that is a wide mileage range, drivers can listen for squealing noises or grinding sounds or feel for vibrations when deploying the brakes. Each of those

signs may indicate brakes need to be replaced.

## Replacing rotors

Like brake pads, rotors also will wear out over time. Brake rotors must meet a certain thickness to be considered safe. If they are below that thickness, then they must be fully replaced. Some drivers opt to have their rotors resurfaced. This means removing any grooves, hotspots or anomalies on the rotors that can cause uneven wear of the brake pads. However, if the rotors are

too thin, they cannot be resurfaced, as this removes some additional rotor material. Rotors can only be resurfaced once before replacement. Some vehicles have rotors that cannot be resurfaced at all.

Rotors can go thousands of miles before they need to be replaced, but vibrations while braking and squeaking noises are usually indicative that rotors need to be checked and/or replaced. Even though brake pads and rotors may wear out at different intervals, many automotive professionals advise replacing rotors when brake pads are changed for optimal performance and safety.

Brakes are an essential safety component. Work with a qualified mechanic to have brake pads and rotors serviced before wear and tear adversely affects driver safety and vehicle performance.

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