

# PREPARING YOUR CAR FOR WINTER



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As the days get shorter and the temperatures begin to drop, you'll want to start thinking about getting your car ready for the winter season. There are many things you'll need to do and check to be prepared for the harsher weather and conditions.

In this guide, we'll go over each and every one of them, so you know what to do when the time comes. Let's start by touching on the importance of preparing your car for winter.

## **Why Is Preparing Your Car for Winter So Important?**

Your vehicle has one very important job: get you to all the places you want to go. In order for it to do its job correctly, you need to make sure it's running under ideal circumstances.

Ensuring that your vehicle has the right equipment to tackle the winter weather is crucial, first and foremost, because of safety. Being prepared means being safe when it comes to the harshness of winter.

Second, being prepared for winter can save you money in the long run. If your vehicle isn't running under winter-ready settings, it'll use more gas. It could even increase your chances of needing reparative maintenance.

Luckily, it's easy to avoid these issues. Keep reading to learn more about getting your car ready for the winter season!



## Things to Do Before Winter Arrives

As winter approaches, there are a few ways to prepare your vehicle before the weather arrives.

### 1. Visually Inspect Your Car's Systems and Parts

Your vehicle has thousands of parts, many of which can be affected by winter weather. Before the weather gets bad, you'll want to do a visual check of the following systems:

- Engine coolant and oil
- Heating system
- Battery and battery cables
- Windshield wiper blades
- Brake system and fluid
- Headlights and taillights
- Tires and wheels

If any of the liquids in your vehicle are low, top them off. If anything else looks amiss, it's recommended to take your vehicle in and have a professional look at it just to be sure.

### 2. Switch Out Your Windshield Wiper Fluid

Your windshield wiper fluid keeps your windshield clean and helps you see better. In the winter, however, it can freeze under extreme conditions if you aren't using windshield wiper fluid that has antifreeze in it.

As an alternative, you can add rubbing alcohol to your current windshield wiper fluid. Rubbing alcohol cannot freeze, so this gives you the benefits of antifreeze windshield wiper fluid.

### 3. Consider Investing in Snow Tires or Chains

Snow tires, with their deep gripping treads, are made specifically for the weather you'll experience in the winter. While you may not experience snow in your region during the winter, snow tires have many winter benefits, including their flexibility in very low temperatures.



## Your Winter Emergency Preparedness Checklist

Even if you follow all the steps listed above to prepare your vehicle for winter, the weather can be unpredictable and incidents can still happen.

Therefore, you'll want to be prepared for those situations. You can do just that by loading your vehicle with the following supplies:

- First aid kit for injuries
- Blankets and/or a sleeping bag for warmth
- A bag of sand or kitty litter for traction
- An ice scraper and/or small shovel
- Non-perishable foods (i.e. granola bars and beef jerky)
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- A spare phone charger

All of these items should be kept in your vehicle throughout the winter season. You'll actually want to get into the habit of keeping your emergency supplies in your backseat, where they're easily accessible (unless you need to transport some friends or relatives, of course).

## Winter Driving Best Practices

Keep in mind, though, that making sure all the parts and systems in your vehicle are working properly is only half the preparation. Getting behind the wheel and doing the driving is very different during the winter as compared to other seasons.

In this section, we'll go over some best practices for driving in cold and wintry weather.

### 1. Don't Waste Gas on Idling Before Leaving

Contrary to widespread belief, your vehicle doesn't need to idle for a few minutes in the winter before you drive it. In fact, the engine warms up faster when it's driven, so idling your car for extended periods of time only wastes your fuel.



## **2. Always Clean Your Car Off Before You Drive**

As obvious as this one may seem, it's good to remember how much better it is to be a little late somewhere if it means being safe. Being able to see is imperative when out on the road. Therefore, you'll want to clean off your entire front and rear windshield as well as all four windows.

However, even though you've cleaned off your windows and can see, snow that's built up on other parts of your car can fly off and cause accidents. Before you get going, be sure to push snow off of every surface of your vehicle, not just the windows.

## **3. Test the Roads and Keep Your Distance**

Aside from checking the weather before you get in the car, there are a few easy ways to test the road conditions. For instance, tap your brakes to test the brake response. Before you do it, make sure you aren't going too fast and that no one is in front or behind you.

This practice will give you a better idea of how long it'll take you to stop. However, you should still keep your distance from other vehicles on the road because, as you drive, the road conditions will likely change.

Additionally, be cautious when you're going over bridges and overpasses since they can be extra slippery.

## **4. Be Aware of Your Surroundings**

Stay aware of what vehicles around you are doing. You should avoid passing vehicles during the winter. You'll also want to see if anyone looks like they're going to pass someone else and leave enough room between you and them.

Furthermore, you should keep an eye out for objects on the road. Snow can make trees fall down in the roadway. Also, if you're driving in heavy snowfall, be mindful of objects that could be hidden in the snow on the road.

## **5. Increase Visibility as Much as Possible**

When snow is coming down in sheets, it can make it tough to see what's in front of you as well as what's coming toward you. To make your vehicle more visible, drive with your headlights on both at night and during the day in the wintertime.

# Additional Tips for Winter

Now that we've gone over how to prepare your vehicle for the winter and best driving practices, let's go over some additional tips for maintaining and taking care of your vehicle throughout the season.

## 1. Utilize Indoor Parking Whenever You Can

Your vehicle is built to withstand a lot of different conditions. However, you should take advantage of indoor parking, such as a garage or shed, as often as possible. Utilizing shelter can come with a variety of benefits, starting with preventing freezing of major systems inside your automobile.

Gas line freezes are also possible. The gas itself doesn't freeze, but rather the built-up condensation, which can wreak havoc on your engine. Your radiator can freeze, too. However, parking indoors or even using a car cover can easily prevent this from happening.

## 2. Keep an Eye on Your Tire Pressure

During the winter, the tire pressure light may come on at some point. When colder temperatures hit your town, it causes the tire pressure to decrease. When there's a sudden and severe cold wave, the air will contract inside your tire, lower the pressure, and potentially set off the tire pressure monitoring system.

This is a good thing to keep in mind as you drive during the winter. However, you'll still want to do regular tire pressure checks to ensure that the tire pressure alert is a result of the weather and not something more serious.

## 3. Fuel Up as Often as Possible

In the event that you find yourself in bumper-to-bumper traffic when the weather is bad, you'll want to have as much gas as possible.

To prevent running out of gas and getting stuck in the middle of a snowstorm, you should get into the habit of topping off your fuel tank whenever you have the time to do so.

## 4. Keep Your Vehicle Clean

Winter doesn't just mean snow. To enhance the safety on the roads, a lot of road salt is used. However, when that salt does its job by melting snow and ice, it mixes with it—and this mixture splashes up on your car. It usually looks like a thick white coat on your vehicle.

Keeping your vehicle clean during the winter isn't a matter of aesthetic, however. This residual salt mixture and other winter moisture can affect your vehicle in the form of rust. Due to this, you'll want to keep the car nice and tidy to prevent your car from rusting.



## Get Ready for Winter Today

After reading through this informative guide, you now have a better idea of what to expect on the roads this winter season. As such, you can get started on prepping your vehicle for this time of year today!