



Basic car maintenance

-  **Petrol / Fuel:** Check you've got sufficient fuel whether it's petrol or diesel for your intended journey. Top up regularly and ensure you put the correct fuel in. Refer to your vehicle handbook (or filling cap) to see which fuel is suitable for your car. At the filling station you will find various pumps – UNLEADED (95 RON), SUPER UNLEADED (97/98 RON) and some stations sell high performance fuels such as SHELL V-POWER and BP ULTIMATE (99 RON). DIESEL also comes in standard and premium. Since 2018 fuel labels have been changing to standardise them across Europe and you will now see the green labels E5 (ethanol) on UNLEADED and black B7 (biodiesel) labels on DIESEL pumps.
-  **Oil:** Consult the vehicle Handbook to check the correct oil for your car. Use the dipstick to check the level, though not all vehicles have a dipstick for some you may need to use the onboard computer. Oil is used to lubricate the internal components of the car's engine and therefore it is essential it is checked regularly. As well as oil you should also check brake fluid, coolant, and the level for power steering fluid as well. This should be done regularly and particularly before setting off on a long journey. Don't rely on warning lights to tell you as these normally show up only when the level reaches the minimum levels.
-  **Coolant:** A mix of water and antifreeze flows through your radiator to cool your car. If you lose too much coolant, the engine will overheat, which can cause severe damage.
-  **Water:** This refers to screen wash which should be topped up using a suitable screen wash chemical, don't rely on just using plain water as this may smear on the windscreen if its greasy.
-  **Damage:** A quick visual check around the car looking for any damage such as broken lights, damage to wheel trims and potential damage to mirrors etc.
-  **Electrics:** Check the exterior lamps are working on the car, ensure the horn works and there are no warning lights showing on the interior dash.
-  **Battery:** Extreme temperatures, age, and long periods of non-use affect batteries. Most batteries will last four or five years. Be careful not to leave electrics such as lights or radio turned on when you leave the car as this may flatten your battery.

 **Rubber:** Tyres must have a tread depth of at least 1.6mm across the central 3/4 of the breadth of the tread and around the entire outer circumference. You should also look for any damage to the tyre walls such as cuts or bulges. There should be no visible cords or damage on the tyre. On older tyres, sometimes the rubber can perish and damage over time and even though the tread maybe within the limits, the tyre can still be illegal. Rubber also includes windscreen wiper blades which should not cause smears when used and clear the whole windscreen. When checking the rubber remember to look at the spare tyre and rear wiper as well.

 **Brake Pads/Shoes:** Brake pads and shoes are designed to wear out, and usually make screeching noises when they need to get replaced. Have them checked on a regular basis. A good set can last up to 50,000 miles.

 **Yourself:** Are you feeling fit and well and have you had sufficient rest before making your journey. Make sure you are not taking any medication that might affect your driving such as causing drowsiness etc if unsure check with a pharmacist or doctor. On a long journey you should also plan to take rest breaks in your drive. Also consider how you drive. Aggressive driving tends to wear things out faster with increased acceleration and harsh braking. City driving tends to be harder on cars with lots of stopping and starting compared to longer motorway journeys, and many items on your car are designed to wear out, so you should plan to keep an eye on these consumable parts. Plenty of expensive repairs can be avoided simply by performing regular checks and maintenance.

 **What's the difference between an MOT and a Service?** Some people think that a service is just an MOT but they both perform very different functions. An MOT will provide a technical safety inspection of the vehicle whereas a service checks wear and tear on the vehicle and will replace parts and fluids where appropriate. ALL VEHICLES over 3 years old need to be MOT'd every 12 months on the anniversary of its registration.

 **Weather conditions:** Always de-ice your windscreen and rear window COMPLETELY, demist your windscreen, and make sure your wing mirrors are clear as well. Winter driving = an extra 5 minutes on your journey time to make sure you're safe.

What you need BEFORE winter hits:

- Ice scraper – at the very least
- De-icer
- A cloth for wiping the inside of your windscreen