Car Maintenance Basics: Monthly Checks

Five minutes that can prevent big problems

Tire pressure

Check when the tires are cold. The correct pressure is on a label in the driver's door frame or in the owner's manual.

Tire tread

Look for even wear and no cuts or bulges. Many places require at least 1.6 mm (2/32 inch) of tread.

Engine oil

Park on level ground with the engine off for a few minutes. Pull the dipstick, wipe, push it in, pull it out and read the level.

Coolant

Look at the level on the side of the coolant tank when the engine is cold. It should sit between MIN and MAX.

Washer fluid

Top up the washer fluid so you can always clear the windshield.

Lights and wipers

Check the headlights, brake lights and indicators. Replace wipers that smear or squeak.

Battery

Look for loose cables or white or blue crust on the terminals. Ask a garage to test an older battery.

Check on level ground with the engine off. Never open a hot radiator or coolant cap.

Tip: Your owner's manual is the final word on pressures, fluids and schedules.

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