

## Maintaining Your Vehicle – Simple Jobs For Anyone To Perform

Less mechanically minded drivers can freeze up at the prospect of popping the bonnet, but having even a basic grasp of what lies beneath can save you shelling out for simple fixes. Here's our guide to some easy DIY jobs and pre-purchase checks.

- Check all fluids once a month, or before long journeys, and top up as required. Always make sure the car is parked on a level surface. Use the dipstick to check the oil level, and monitor coolant, windscreen-washer fluid and brake-fluid levels by checking them against the markers on the side of their respective reservoirs. Hydraulic power-steering systems and automatic gearboxes may also need periodic fluid checks. Dashboard warning lights often alert you when levels drop too low, but you shouldn't wait until this happens.

- Check the condition and pressure of your tires, from cold, at least once a month. Keep them inflated to the pressure recommended in the owner's handbook to keep the car safe and save on fuel bills. Don't forget to check the spare. Use a tread-depth gauge to make sure all tires exceed the legal minimum depth of 1.6mm across 75% of the width of the tire. It's best to replace tires when they reach 2mm.

To avoid wasting money on a vehicle purchase, check the following items beforehand. Even if you're not able to fix problems yourself, identifying them early can limit repair bills.

- Check the windscreen for chips and cracks.
- Check the horn, wipers and washers work properly.
- Make sure door mirrors aren't broken.
- Check all the seatbelt buckles work.
- Ask a friend to help you check all exterior lights work correctly. Replace any blown bulbs and watch for broken lenses.
- Make sure the handbrake will hold the car on a hill.