



Weekly Automobile Check

For the sake of your safety, and your wallet, take a few minutes each week to make sure everything on your vehicle is as it should be. If you can't do it yourself, ask a friend to help.

TYRES:

Keep pressures at the recommended levels. Buy yourself a good quality pressure gauge to test pressures before and AFTER inflating – some gauges in service stations may be calibrated incorrectly.

If the car is left standing for extended periods, check and inflate where necessary before you drive, or as soon after as you can.

Watch the treads for wear.

WIPERS and SCREEN:

Use a cleaner specifically made for removing bug-squash and road scum on both glass and wiper blades. If you like a one-step wash-and-wax, go over with screen cleaner before the wax dries and sets hard - it's almost impossible to remove once it has and it will impair vision.

Add the recommended amount of a quality additive to the screen washer reservoir. Keep this topped up.

UNDER the HOOD:

Check levels in the radiator and expansion tank. Top up with the recommended coolant if required. Excessive and continuous coolant loss means trouble and should be investigated by a mechanic.

Check power-steering fluid level, brake and clutch fluid (if manual). If loss occurs, look for signs of leakage and report this ASAP.

Check engine oil level and transmission (if automatic). Refer to the manufacturer's instructions because with some models the engine needs to be warm.

N.B. NEVER overfill. And check the appearance of ALL oils and fluids occasionally - they should look clean – grubby could indicate signs of wear in the unit.

Periodically, check belts for wear and hoses for leaks.

ELECTRICS: keep the battery securely anchored and the terminals clean and tight. Older types that are not sealed need topping up from time to time. Use distilled water for this, but be careful not to overfill.

WARNING: batteries contain sulphuric acid, the gas of which is highly explosive – so don't smoke around them, and take care not to cause a spark by shorting out the electrics with tools or metallic bracelets or jewellery. There is also a risk of electrocution!

LIGHTS and INDICATORS:

Get someone to operate the lights while you check that they are working properly.

SERVICING and REPAIRS:

These are a necessary expense if you want to keep your motoring economical and your car in good condition. Putting them off until later is to invite major problems down the track.

For more detailed information on this subject, go to Money Matters MM07 on the WEBSITE
This includes advice on what to look out for when buying a used car

