

New Driver?

Here's What Actually Matters.

Congratulations on the new set of keys. You don't need to know everything about cars to take care of one — you just need a few habits. Here are the basics that keep you safe, keep small problems from turning into expensive ones, and keep you from feeling lost the first time something looks or sounds off. Parents, this one's worth a quick read together.

01 Check Your Tire Pressure

Do this once a month. Low tires wear out faster, hurt your gas mileage, and make the car harder to control. The right number is printed on a sticker inside your driver's door, not on the tire itself.

02 Learn How to Check Your Oil Life

Pull the dipstick, wipe it, put it back in, pull it again. Oil should sit between the two marks. Newer cars may show this as a percentage on the dash instead, so check there if you've got it.

03 Learn Your Warning Lights

A check engine light doesn't always mean pull over right now, but it does mean get it looked at soon. A red light — oil, temperature, brakes — means stop driving and get help. Know the difference before you need to know it.

04 Don't Run on Empty

Try to fill up before you hit a quarter tank. Running consistently low can pull debris from the bottom of the tank into your fuel system, and it's just not a fun way to find out you're stranded.

05 Trust Weird Noises and Smells

Squealing, grinding, thumping, or a burning smell are your car's way of telling you something's wrong. You don't have to diagnose it yourself. You just have to not ignore it.

06 Know How To Change Your Spare

Find the spare tire and the jack before you need them, not during a flat on the side of the highway. Learn how to change a spare tire by watching an online video or practicing hands-on before hitting the road.

07 Give It a Once-Over Before Long Drives

Before a road trip, take two minutes to check your tires, your lights, and your washer fluid. It's a small habit that catches problems while they're still small.

08 When in Doubt, Ask

You are not supposed to already know all of this. Nobody does when they start. Asking a parent, a mechanic, or someone at the dealership is always the right move — guessing is not.

THE ONE THING TO REMEMBER

Most car trouble doesn't happen out of nowhere. It gives you a warning first — a light, a sound, a feeling that something's a little off. Your job isn't to be a mechanic. It's just to pay attention and speak up when something changes.

QUESTIONS?

WE'RE HAPPY TO HELP YOU FIGURE IT OUT.

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