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Winter Car Care: How To Prep Your Car For The Cold

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As winter approaches, your car will also need concessions, just like your pets will when Jack Frost visits. In addition to our tips for winterizing your vehicle, we provided some additional advice.

Two categories of winterization tasks are involved: Car care and personal safety. Both are important, most will alter your winter driving experience. We'll start with personal safety since it helps you and your car survive the winter.

Washer Fluids and Winter Wipers

A blade that leaves a slushy streak on the windshield every time it travels is annoying and potentially dangerous. Windshield wipers are made of rubber, just like tires, so consider buying winter wipers designed for better pliant performance.

Make sure to keep a spare blade in the car or at home so you're never caught with your wipers down. Get rid of old blades every six to 12 months. The last thing you want to do is get stuck when it starts raining, and no one has wipers in stock. We recommend buying Bosch snowblades. Another good option is Rain-X latitude blades, which have water-repellent features that will keep your windshield clean. Another good budget option is Aero all-season blades which come with a six-month manufacturer's warranty.

Also, keep your car's fluid reservoir full by buying a couple of bottles of washer fluid at the auto parts store.

Winter Tires

Winter tires are recommended by every knowledgeable source we know. YouTube is full of videos demonstrating how much better they perform than all-season tires in snow and ice. Winter tires improve acceleration, steering, and braking.

In order to avoid this step, you paid extra for all-wheel drive. But AWD is only part of winter driving. AWD drivetrains may provide extra traction, but they are not able to help with steering or braking on slippery surfaces. AWD can send power to the wheel that grips the best. AWD is worthless if no tire grips.



The tread pattern of winter tires is designed to clear snow and slush while maintaining elasticity and grip in freezing temperatures. Winter tires use rubber compounds that resist hardening.

Change The Engine Oil

The cold causes the oil to thicken, making the battery work harder to start the car. In addition to taking longer to reach the places it needs to protect, thick oil also leads to more wear on the engine during startup. For information about which oil to use at which temperature range, consult your owner's manual. Some manuals recommend switching to a lighter weight in cold climates.

Make sure differentials and transfer cases are well-lubricated with the oil recommended for their differentials and transfer cases. If you drive a diesel and use 15W-40, your engine will thank you for switching to lighter oil weight even if you use a block heater.

Check The Battery

In winter, the 12-volt battery has to work harder to start the car because output drops with temperature, as with electric vehicle batteries. When the ambient temperature is about 80 degrees Fahrenheit, your car's 12-volt battery reaches its maximum output. Check your battery for proper voltage while cranking and at idle, and clean the terminals if they're corroded for five minutes.