

Tips for Conducting Vehicle Inspections

Once you develop a systematic approach to checking your car, light truck or van, it takes only a few minutes. Some items should be inspected every day, while others can be inspected on a weekly basis. Information below is laid out in an order that many find to be a logical step-wise flow for an efficient inspection. The tips provide helpful guidance and useful reminders. Click on the links for brief instructional videos or step by step instructions on how to inspect each item, and what you should be looking for during the inspection.

 Item	 Daily	 Weekly	 Tips	 Website Info
Engine Oil	Before starting the engine, check the oil level daily; top up as necessary.		Consult your owner's manual to confirm the oil you use is the right viscosity if operating in extreme heat or cold.	How to Check Engine Oil Bad Engine Oil
Tires-Air Pressure	Visually confirm tires look to be properly inflated. Check for signs of tire damage or unusual wear.	Use a tire gauge to confirm all tires are inflated to manufacturer recommendations.	Find tire inflation recommendations posted on the driver side door jamb or in the glove box and listed in your owner's manual.	Tire Safety Tips
Spare Tire		Use tire gauge to confirm inflated to recommended pressure.	If you have full size spare tire, you may want to rotate it into use to achieve even tire wear.	Tire Maintenance 101
Tires-Tread Depth		Use a tread depth gauge to check tread depth of all tires.	The Motor Vehicle Act requires that tires be replaced when tread depth wears to 2/32" (or 1.6 mm). At best, that provides marginal traction in ideal road conditions. When roads are wet it's not enough tread to prevent hydroplaning. Plan to replace tires when tread depth is 4/32" or 3.2 mm.	Transport Canada Tire Safety

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Headlights	Confirm hi-beams, low-beams and fog lights work.			Headlight Maintenance BC Vehicle Lighting Requirements
Tail lights	Check that taillights work.		Between regular wash jobs, use a damp cloth to clean dirt and road film from all light lenses.	
Turn Signals	Confirm both front and rear signal lights work.			
Emergency Signals	Confirm emergency flashers are operational.			
Windshield	Start your driving day with a clean view of the world. Check for rock chips.		Use a clean cloth and automotive windshield cleaner to clean the INSIDE of your windshield.	
Wipers	Confirm wiper controls work, and wiper blades clear the windshield.		Replace wiper blades when you see streaks or gaps in their path. Switch to winter wiper blades in October.	Replacing Your Wiper Blades
Heater / Defroste	Check fan and flow direction controls are working well.			
Horn	Confirm horn works.			
Seatbelts	Confirm seatbelts and mechanisms (latches, emergency restraint, recoil) work properly.		Most vehicles have adjustable shoulder belts; adjust it so that the shoulder belt rests on the middle of your collar bone rather than on neck or shoulder.	Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

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Rear Vision Mirrors	Confirm mirrors are clean, free of damage and adjusted for your driving position.		Set your mirrors for optimal rearward visibility. Use the video links to find out more.	Adjust Mirrors to Avoid Blind Spots Adjust Your Mirrors
In-Cab Ergonomics	Adjust your seat position, steering column (tilt / telescopic) and headrest location for your optimal driving position.		Confirm your driving area is free of clutter. Ensure all items in the cab are secured / stowed.	Vehicle Ergonomics Ergonomics For Truckers
Parking Brake	Test parking brake for operation and holding capacity (see website).		If your vehicle has a manual transmission, you use your parking brake daily. If you have an automatic transmission, it's still best practice to set the parking brake when you park.	Test Your Parking Brake
Brakes	As you back out of the garage and before you enter traffic, gently apply your brakes to confirm they are operating as they should.	Find a quiet location with no other traffic (oncoming or behind you) grip the steering wheel and give your brakes a firm application to confirm your ABS system is working.		How To Check Disc Brakes How To Check ABS Brakes
Instrument Panel - Gauges / Warning Lights	Confirm no warning lights are flashing. If there are, engage a technician to address them immediately.	Instrument lights working.	If your vehicle has gauges (e.g. oil pressure, charge rate, coolant temperature) confirm they indicate normal operating temperatures / pressures.	

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Body Damage	Look for door dings, scrapes and scratches that may have occurred the previous day.		Watch for loose hubcaps or body stripping, rock chips. Note and report them immediately.	
Battery		Confirm battery is securely mounted; ensure battery terminal connections are tight (tug test) and check for signs of corrosion; confirm battery mount is secure.		How to Check Your Car Battery
Vehicle Documents	Take your drivers licence with you. Have a copy of the registration on board.	Check expiry dates of insurance documents and renew before expiry.		
Licence Plate	Confirm licence plate remains firmly attached, visible.	Ensure licence plate lights work.		
Transmission		Check automatic transmission fluid level.		Checking Auto Trans Fluid Level
Steering		Assess the “free play” in your steering system to confirm it remains tight (no excess free-play).		
Engine Belts and Hoses		With the engine off and cool, visually inspect belts and hoses. Gently tug them to confirm they are secure. If you see evidence of leaks, kinks, splits, cracks or abrasion, have a technician check it.	Replace engine belts consistent with manufacturer’s recommendations, or as signs of wear become evident.	Checking Belts and Hoses

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Engine Noises	Listen for any unusual sounds (tics, pings, rattles, knocks).	Listen for new or increasingly loud exhaust sounds.		
Roadside Emergency / First Aid Kit	Confirm necessary contents are present.		Check expiry dates and replace items as they expire.	Build Your Own Vehicle Emergency Kit Winter Driving Emergency Kit
Windshield Washer		Check there is enough washer fluid.	Use washer fluid with bug remover in summer, and winter washer fluid when travelling in sub-zero temperatures. Have an extra container with you for longer road trips in dirty conditions.	
Coolant Level		Visually confirm coolant is within operating range level in reservoir.		Checking The Coolant Level
Brake Fluid Level		Check reservoir fluid level is within correct operating range.		How to Check Brake Fluid Level
Power Steering Fluid Level		Check reservoir fluid level is within correct operating range.		How to Check & Add Power Steering Fluid
Leak Check	As you walk around your vehicle, peer underneath it looking for fluid on the ground or accumulating on component. As you enter your parking spot at work or home, watch for evidence.	If you drive a lot during a day, stop every 2 hours and stretch your legs. While you are walking around your vehicle, check the vehicle for loose wheel nuts, warm brakes, etc.		