

A close-up photograph of a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a dark blue short-sleeved button-down shirt, smiling warmly at the camera. He is leaning over the open hood of a car, with his hands near the engine compartment. The background is dark and out of focus, showing parts of the car's engine and the workshop environment.

**FALL
CAR
CARE**

Washing Summer Away

Are you home for the fall after a summer full of fun road trips? Did the front of your car take a beating from bugs along the way? Before winter arrives, it's time to get the exterior of your car ready for colder temperatures.

This means staying on top of car washes to help wipe away the fun of summer.

CAR WASH

If you love spending a Saturday afternoon washing and waxing your car in the driveway, have at it. Just remember that you can end up using double or even triple the amount of water at home compared to taking your car to a car wash station.

Consider washing it at a more-efficient car wash and then waxing it at home. You could help conserve water and still get to tend to your pride and joy — a win-win.

In many parts of the country, just because it's technically the fall season doesn't mean the cold weather, ice and snow are in the distant future. Depending on where you live, you may already be seeing snow on the ground.

It is imperative to thoroughly wash the undercarriage of your car during the fall and winter months. This is because any residual road salt that your car may have accrued can suck up the moisture in the humid air of the summer, which could lead to even more problems when the heat comes calling.



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DON'T FORGET THE INTERIOR

Crumbs and dust are easy to vacuum up from your car's floors — if you can see them. Suck up the visible items first,

and then use an air compressor to blow the more hidden objects out of their hiding places. The spaces between the console and your seats is hard to reach with a vacuum. An air compressor will keep these spots dust-free.

Don't forget to treat your seats — especially if they're leather. A specialized conditioner will keep your leather looking great and standing up to the test of time. Consult with your owner's manual for any material-specific information.

Windows also should be taken care of during a thorough cleaning. Find a glass cleaner that works for you and make this the last step of the wash. Use a microfiber cloth to prevent streaks or spots from forming on the windows.

Winterize Your Car

The winter chill can be downright damaging to your car's engine and other systems. What you do about it now, before the temperatures drop, can make a dramatic impact on the overall health of your car during the winter.

The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence has some advice for drivers this winter who are looking to prepare their vehicles for the cold air and potentially icy conditions. Remember that every automobile is different, but there are some basics to follow for ultimate protection.

- Read the owner's manual and follow the recommended service schedules. These guidelines are meant to keep you safe and your vehicle on the road for years to come.

- Have any issues with your heating system checked out by a certified technician. It could need a simple adjustment or perhaps an entire replacement. Either way, you'll want to have it checked now to be safe.

- Also have a certified technician check any issues related to rough idling or stalling. Getting stuck on the side of the road in the frigid cold air is not a situation you want this winter.

- Have your belts and hoses checked by a qualified technician for tightness and overall quality. Replacing a leaky hose is simpler and more cost effective than replacing a damaged engine or heating system.



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- Change the oil and oil filter as specified in the owner's manual. Always remember to properly dispose of used oil

when performing an oil change yourself.

- Replace worn wiper blades and keep plenty of

washer solvent on hand. Consider adding a de-icing product to your reservoir to help your blades stand up to

icy conditions.

- Inspect all lights and bulbs; replace burned out bulbs.

Fixing Windshield Cracks

Windshield damage can be frustrating. You can do everything right as a driver and still incur chips or cracks from a stray rock. While this is out of your control, taking quick action to fix the problem is critical.

Even the smallest windshield chip can turn into a large crack, which can then lead to a costly windshield replacement. Even more important, cracks can impede your line of sight or compromise the overall rigidity of your windshield.

You basically have two options when it comes to fixing a smaller chip: doing it yourself with a windshield repair kit or hiring a specialist to take care of the work. Both have pros and cons, so consider all factors before making your choice.

DOING IT YOURSELF

Windshield crack repair kits are sold in the auto parts departments of many local and box stores. If applied correctly, these acrylic adhesive and filler options are great for repairing small chips or cracks.

The instructions for application may vary between products, but applying these materials to your windshield is a straightforward process.

Some things to remember:

- Move your car out of direct sunlight to keep the repair resin from drying too quickly
- Don't forget to use a pin or small nail to dig out any loose chips of glass
- Protect the area of the car you're leaning against with a



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towel to prevent scratching

The major risk you take when handling a repair yourself is not knowing if it's going to work. But by following simple instructions, you should be able to fill in the chip and stop it from spreading. It may not be perfect, but it will get your windshield safe and road-

ready.

HIRING A SHOP

You may think that taking your car to a body shop for a windshield repair will be expensive. You might be right, but depending on your insurance coverage, a repair may

actually come at no cost to you. Review your policy and talk to your agent about the specifics of your policy.

One of the greatest benefits of having a professional handle your repair is the warranty that might come with it. Many shops will back their performance with a long-term guar-

antee to give you confidence in their work.

Be sure to know exactly where and how big your windshield crack is before dropping your car off at the shop. The more you know about the crack, the better prepared you'll be to analyze the shop's job later.

Car Care Month

October is Car Care Month, a perfect time to get your vehicles up to speed. Between selecting your Halloween costume and watching college football, find time to tend to your four-wheeled family members.

Your car gets you around no matter what the temperature or road conditions, so it's up to you to maintain it. As the weather cools, complete a seasons vehicle checkup to maximize your car's efficiency and lifespan.

Follow our tips below to keep your engine running.

BATTERY AND CHARGING SYSTEM

The AAA recommends having your battery and charging system tested by a trained technician and reminds members they can request a visit from a mobile battery service tech who can test and replace a battery on site.

If testing yourself, be sure to follow the proper safety procedures in your battery's manual instructions. Don't forget to make sure the battery terminals and cable ends are free of corrosion. An improperly secured battery can lead to car troubles or even personal injury, so be sure to understand how your battery works before attempting to maintain it.

BELTS & HOSES

The AAA also recommends that you inspect the underside of accessory drive belts for cracks or fraying. Many newer



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belts may not show wear and tear. The AAA suggests replacing these at 60,000-mile intervals.

Engine hoses also should be on your list of things to inspect. Check out your cooling system hoses for leaks, cracks or loose clamps. Replace any that are

brittle or feel more spongy than normal hoses. These are probably near the end of their lifespans.

TIRE CARE

Prepare your tires for the upcoming winter conditions

by making sure yours are in good condition. Replace any tire with less than 3/32-inches of tread, says the AAA. Prevention is your best bet in maintaining effective tires, so be sure to get regular alignments at the recommended time intervals.

If your tires appear to be in good shape, check inflation on all four and the spare. The colder conditions in the fall and winter can drop tire pressures. Check your owner's manual or the side of the tire for the recommended PSI and fill accordingly.

Prepare for Fall Driving

Fall driving may not seem like a particularly dangerous activity, but consider these key factors: unpredictable weather changes, less sunlight in the evening hours and the potential for more deer and wildlife on the roads.

Come to think of it, fall driving requires an alert operator and a prepared vehicle. That's why taking some preventive steps now is so important to remaining safe on the roads when the leaves begin to fall.

THE WEATHER

Once the leaves begin to fall on the road and become wet from rain, they can pose slippery threats to your driving safety. Keep an eye out for patches of wet leaves to prevent potential issues.

Fall also is the perfect time for the occasional rain or snow storm that seemingly comes out of nowhere. The fog also can play a part in creating dangerous driving conditions, especially during the early morning hours before the sun comes up. Make sure your windshield wipers are up to the challenge. Change them at the end of summer to help keep your visibility clear.

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

The end of daylight saving time means less sunlight during the evening hours, which can lead to reduced driver visibility. Especially if you're traveling on unfamiliar roads during the evening, pay



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special attention to road signs and changes in terrain.

The comfortable temperatures may still be drawing out large numbers of bikers and joggers, too, so keep your focus to avoid unnecessary incidents. While the sun is still up and bright, wear sunglasses to help battle the glare

caused by reflections off car windows and hoods.

WATCH OUT FOR DEER

Deer collisions account for thousands of accidents every year across the United States. Prime times for deer to run across roads are at dawn and

dusk. Since fall is an active breeding time for deer populations, they are more prevalent on our roadways during this time of year than other seasons.

If you see a deer cross the roadway, proceed with caution. They generally travel in groups, so be on the lookout

for others.

Hitting a deer at even a slow speed can damage your car and hurt both you and the deer. Work on using your peripheral vision to keep an eye on the sides of the roads. Spotting them here will give you enough time to slow down and prevent a collision.

Glove Box Check

Pop quiz! What's in your glove box right now? Some old service receipts and a few pens? Fast food wrappers and old CDs? Are you even sure what's in there?

Glove compartments offer a great nook for storing both essential and non-essential items. If you're not using your glove box, you're missing out on the opportunity to be more prepared should you be pulled over by a police officer or be involved in a collision.

Re-think your glove box strategy and make sure the following items are in it:

Critical documentation: Keeping items such as your car insurance cards in your glove box isn't just convenient — it's the law. Most insurance agencies send a small placard or pouch for storage of your cards, so they're easy to find inside your glove box when you need them the most.

It's a good idea to store copies of titles and registration in your glove box, but you'll want to keep your title at home and your registration in your wallet in case your car is ever stolen. Your owner's manual and maintenance schedule also make for great additions to your glove box. Just be sure to keep the maintenance schedule up to date.

MEDICAL INFORMATION

Being involved in an accident can lead to a situation



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where you may not be able to communicate with emergency personnel. That's why having a list of medical conditions, necessary medications and allergies is crucial to keep in your glove box.

Write down these details

on a piece of paper and place it in an envelope labeled "Family Medical Information." Emergency personnel are trained to check the glove box for these kinds of documents, so be sure you're prepared to help

them assist you.

OTHER ESSENTIALS

Here are some other items you'll want to add to your glove box:

- Emergency contact information for your spouse, par-

ents or children;

- Flashlight in case your car stalls or you blow a tire at night;

- Plastic or paper bags to use for collecting trash; and

- Snacks such as granola bars or sealed containers of nuts.

Choose a Body Shop

Many car enthusiasts care about their car's body as much as their own. Scrubbing them to ensure constant cleanliness. Immediately addressing dings and scratches. Waxing them to perfection.

This love doesn't come out of vanity. It is important to keep up on your car's exterior to prevent issues such as rust, dirt or grime buildup. That's why it's so stressful for a car-lover to see his pride and joy damaged in a collision or storm.

Enter your friendly body shop. Professional detailers and other staff members should be ready to help your vehicle come out looking new. Finding the right shop for your needs can be a challenge, but a little research can go a long way.

SHOP AROUND

If you've been around cars a long time, you probably already have a body shop in your back pocket. If it's your first time, start shopping for a body shop before you need one. Being prepared ahead of time will help you make the best decision for your car and your wallet.

Pay attention to local newspaper ads. Search online for body shops in your area. Ask your friends and family members where they prefer to drop off their car. It doesn't necessarily matter how you learn about the best shop for your needs, just that you actually find one.



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Check with your local consumer organization for red flags on the operations, qualifications or customer service of your local shops. Remember that if enough customers have had problems with a particular shop, it probably isn't worth the risk of

bringing your car there for repair.

CONSIDER THE QUALIFICATIONS

Would you trust your home's electrical work to an

unlicensed electrician? The same standard should hold true for the body of your car. Assess whether your potential body shop of choice has a staff that is credentialed with trade school diplomas, service certifications or other advanced training.

Certifications and designations should give you confidence that the people working on your car know what they're doing. It also should tell you that the shop's management takes pride in recruiting and retaining quality talent.