

A young man and woman are looking at the engine of a car with the hood open. The man is on the left, leaning over the engine, and the woman is on the right, also leaning over. They are both wearing light-colored shirts. The background is a bright, sunny sky. In the top right corner, there is an orange square with the text 'RSA' in white. In the bottom right corner, there is a circular icon with a clipboard and a checkmark. The bottom half of the image has a dark orange overlay with white text.

RSA

# Car Safety Checks

## 12 Basic Vehicle Maintenance Checks

Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre / Road Safety Authority



# Introduction

It is the responsibility of the owner and/or driver of a vehicle to make sure it's in a roadworthy condition at all times when used in a public place. All parts and equipment of a vehicle must be in good and efficient working order.

It is not enough that your car has a valid NCT disc on the windscreen. A vehicle needs to be serviced in line with manufacturer's recommendations in between roadworthiness tests as well. It's your legal obligation to do so. Unfortunately, some motorists continue to think that once their car passes the NCT it doesn't need to be serviced until the next test or until a warning light comes on.

The following table provides general maintenance guidelines. Factors such as age, mileage and driving conditions will affect timelines and every vehicle is different so please consult your owner's manual or

Maintenance	Timing*
Full Service	Every 10,000km to 15,000km
Walk Around Checks	At least once a week and before any long journey

\* These are general guidelines only, please refer to your manual or contact the manufacturer for time lines specific to your vehicle

Video demonstrations for these checks are available at:  
[www.youtube.com/RSAIreland](http://www.youtube.com/RSAIreland)

contact the original manufacturer or authorised distributor for recommended service intervals.

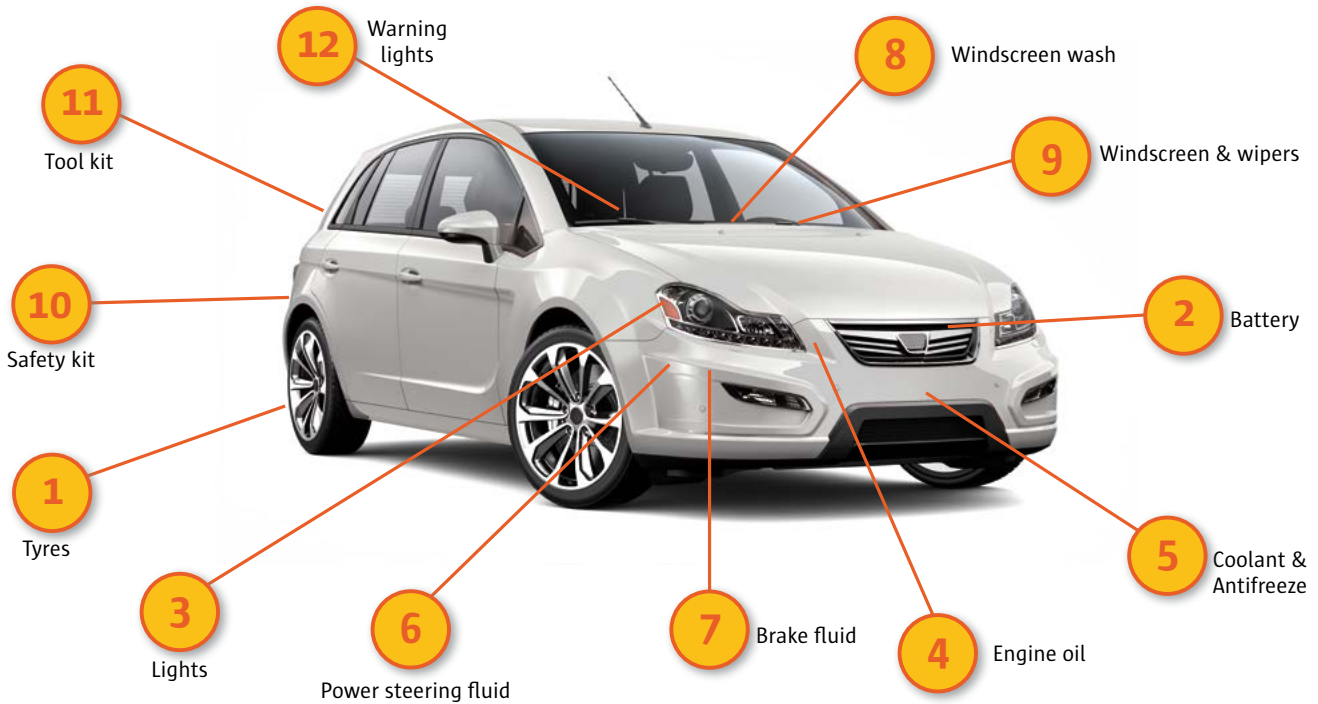
The owner's manual, and in the case of many modern vehicles the car itself, will tell you when a service is next due and what will be required. Always keep your owner's manual in your glove compartment. It contains valuable instructions, information and warnings specific to your vehicle.

Many drivers consider servicing an expense, but it ensures your safety and the safety of other road users and significantly reduces the chances of your vehicle breaking down. Keeping your car in a good condition can also save you money. A valid service history and regular maintenance will not only increase a vehicle's resale value, it helps to ensure that a car runs more efficiently and safely, minimising problems and expensive repairs in the future.

The RSA has prepared this booklet to offer 12 practical safety checks which you can carry out on your vehicle in between services.



# 12 Car Safety Checks



# 1

# Tyres

Your tyres are the only point of contact between you and the road so it is vital that they are maintained correctly. Complete the following checks before taking to the road:

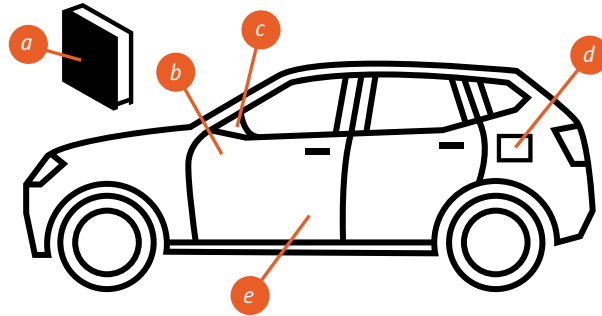
*Check tyres for correct inflation pressure.*

The pressurised air inside your tyre has to support the weight of your vehicle and its load. So it is important to complete regular checks using an accurate pressure gauge. Watch our step by step guide on how to inflate your tyres correctly at [www.youtube.com/RSAIreland](http://www.youtube.com/RSAIreland).

**Tread depth** – the minimum legal permitted tread depth is 1.6mm but the RSA recommends changing all tyres at 3mm. You can use a €1 coin, as shown opposite, to ensure your tyre's tread depth is above 1.6mm.

**Examine the condition of all tyres** – look for defects such as sidewall tear, exposed plies, penetration damage, bulges etc.

Where to find your tyre pressure:

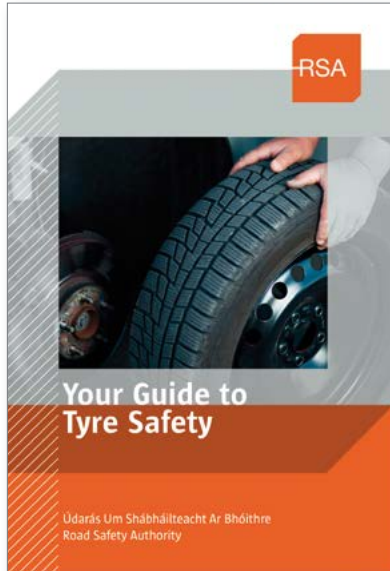


If you have any doubt or concerns over your tyres have them checked today at a local garage or reputable tyre dealer.

- a** Inside the car user manual
- b** In your glove compartment
- c** The pressure warning light on your dashboard
- d** Inside the fuel cover
- e** Inside your door

# 1

## Tyres (cont)



View our guide to tyre safety booklet which contains further useful information.

# 2

## Battery

**Worn out and flat batteries are reported as one of the most common causes of breakdowns in Ireland.**

During harsh conditions a battery's capacity is reduced, as is its ability to accept charge, the results of which can be difficulty or failure to start your vehicle. Ensure your battery is checked at it's next due service.

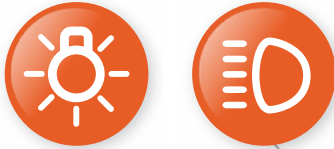




# 3

## Lights

It might seem obvious but lighting is extremely important to ensure that you can see and be seen by other motorists. Check all lighting regularly and replace bulbs as necessary.



An exterior lighting check should examine the following;

- a** Side and head lamps and Daytime Running Lights (DRLs)
- b** Direction indicators
- c** Fog lamps
- d** Rear lamps
- e** Stop lamps
- f** Number plate lighting
- g** Reverse lamps

It is also important to keep all lights clean and to replace any damaged lenses.



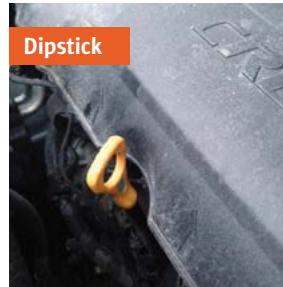
# 4

## Engine Oil Level

Engine oil lubricates, cleans, protects and cools the car's engine. It is very important that the oil and oil filter are both changed in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines. Failure to maintain the correct oil level and carry out the necessary oil or filter changes can result in extensive and costly engine damage.

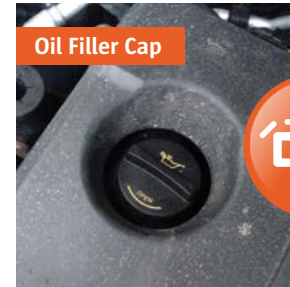
Don't wait for the red oil pressure warning light to come on – check the engine oil dipstick level today. The oil level should be checked on a regular basis and especially before setting off on long journeys. For further information and guidance on how to complete oil checks on your vehicle, refer to your owner's manual.

If your vehicle doesn't have a dipstick (as pictured on the right), a dashboard display will appear to tell you that the oil level is low. The Owner's Manual will specify the correct oil to use.



Dipstick

*Dipstick shown above for checking the engine oil level.*



Oil Filler Cap

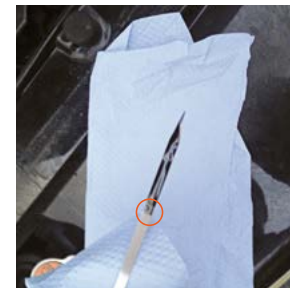
*Oil Filler Cap shown above for topping up engine oil.*



Minimum Mark

Maximum Mark

*Oil level should be between the maximum mark and minimum mark as shown in the pictures above.*





# 5

## Coolant & Antifreeze

A car engine produces a lot of heat when operating and so must be cooled constantly. Check the coolant level in your car is correct as a low coolant level can result in your engine overheating. The coolant tank is usually located under the bonnet. In the majority of modern cars it's made of a transparent material and has a maximum and minimum mark on the exterior. If in doubt, please refer to the owners manual.

When the engine is **cold** the coolant level should read between the maximum and minimum marks. If the coolant level requires topping up this should only be carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines which will also specify the correct coolant or antifreeze and concentration to use.



### **WARNING!**

**DO NOT OPEN THE CAP WHEN THE ENGINE IS HOT AS IT MAY CAUSE INJURY**

# 6

## Power Steering Fluid

Ensure that the level of power steering fluid (located under the bonnet) is checked regularly between services. The power steering fluid tank is also made of a transparent material. There are usually readings for hot and cold conditions as illustrated opposite.

The level of the fluid in the tank should read between the maximum and minimum markings. Please refer to the owner's manual for further information. This will also tell you the correct power steering fluid to use for your vehicle. This is important, as using the incorrect fluid can contaminate the power steering system and cause damage.



# 7

## Brake Fluid

Check the brake fluid level in your vehicle. This is usually a transparent plastic container located under the bonnet (please refer to the owner's manual for more information). This allows you to inspect the fluid level inside the container without the need to remove the filler cap.

Opening the cap to check the fluid level is not recommended as this can result in contamination. A thorough inspection of the brakes cannot be carried out unless the wheels are removed from the vehicle. Therefore it is very important that your vehicle is serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines.

Between servicing intervals look out for tell tale signs of worn brakes such as:

- The brake pedal requiring the application of more pressure to stop the vehicle.
- Noises in the form of scraping, and squealing when the brakes are applied.
- The vehicle pulling to the left or right when the brakes are applied.
- If Brake Fluid level is at or below minimum level contact your garage immediately.



Brake Fluid Container

If you notice any of these tell tale signs or are unsure of the condition of the vehicle's brakes, take action immediately. In most cars worn brake pads will not illuminate a malfunction indicator.

## 8

## Windscreen Wash

**Check the level of windscreen wash (pictured below) regularly and top up as necessary.**

This is located under the bonnet. Where topping up is required, we recommend using a clean funnel to prevent water spilling on other engine components. An additive containing an antifreeze agent (in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines) is necessary to prevent the system becoming frozen. Please note that Engine Coolant or Anti-freeze should not be added to Windscreen Wash.



## 9

## Windscreen & Wipers

**Check all window cleaning and demisting equipment is fully operational. The windscreen demister, windscreen washer pump and rear window heater are essential in maintaining good visibility. Examine wiper blades for wear and replace as necessary.**

On average a set of wiper blades last around 1-2 years, however this can vary depending on usage and operating conditions. Indications that wiper blades require replacement include; lines or streaks, noise, judder and wind lift.



Be prepared for all eventualities when taking to the road. The RSA strongly recommends that motorists carry a number of essentials in the boot of their car including:

- High visibility vest
- A working torch
- A hazard warning triangle
- De-icing equipment (for glass and door locks)
- First aid kit



# 11

## Tool Kit

Most modern cars come equipped with a small tool kit, especially those with a spare wheel. Check that all necessary parts such as the car jack, axle stands, wheel brace etc. are in the kit.

The kit must be stored in a safe and secure place where it cannot cause injury. Also check that the spare wheel is correctly inflated. In some cases a puncture repair kit or a space saving wheel may be provided instead of a spare wheel. Owners should familiarise themselves with how these are operated.



# 12

## Warning Lights

Examine the vehicle dashboard for warning lights. If a warning is present, as a general rule, yellow lights mean 'check as soon as possible', red means 'stop vehicle as soon as it is safe to do so'.

Some common examples are outlined below:



Engine



Glow Plug/  
Engine Management  
Lamp



Oil Level



Anti-lock  
Brake System



Electronic Stability  
Control



Tyre Pressure



Airbag and Seat  
Belt System



Light Bulbs



Windscreen  
Wash Level



Fog Lights



Fuel Level



Park Assist



Battery



Brakes



Engine Cooling  
System

If you are unsure about any symbol appearing on your dashboard, please refer to your Owner's Manual or contact the original manufacturer



Video demonstrations for  
these checks are available at:  
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“Safer roads... Only you can get us there”

Working to Save Lives

Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre  
Road Safety Authority

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