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## Wash your car like a pro to protect its value

Vehicle owners know maintaining a vehicle can be a lot of work. Taking the time to properly care for a vehicle can prolong its life expectancy and help owners avoid breakdowns and other issues along the way.

Regular washing is an aspect of vehicle maintenance that some may classify as a purely cosmetic benefit. Certainly a car wash can keep the vehicle looking its best, but there are other advantages to washing as well. Washing offers preventative maintenance for the car's paint and can help prevent rust and corrosion resulting from dirt, acid rain and road salt. Rust can compromise hydraulic brake and fuel lines, as well as many moving parts in the chassis and frame. Corrosion of electrical connectors and other parts under the hood can lead to leaks, electrical shorts and a host of additional problems. It's easy to see how washing the car is more essential than one might have suspected.

If you live in an area with a high amount of dust or industry, you may need to wash your car as frequently as once a week. Drivers who live along or near coastal areas may need to wash their vehicles frequently to combat sea salt

buildup. Garage-kept vehicles may be able to go longer between washes, but in general washing a vehicle every two to three weeks is a good rule of thumb. In addition, a good sealant will protect the paint and other trims throughout the year.

The following are some other car-wash tips to follow.

- Always use a proper washing soap solution. This will preserve the car's finish better than other homemade soaps. Avoid using dishwashing liquid, which can strip protective wax coatings.

- Be prompt when cleaning off bugs, sap and bird droppings that may stick to the paint and become difficult to remove over time.

- Wait until a car has cooled down before washing. Heat speeds up the drying of soap and water and can make it more difficult to clean.

- Always use a clean, non-abrasive sponge. Resist the urge to move the sponge in circles as you clean. Doing so can create noticeable swirl scratch marks. Instead, move the sponge lengthwise across the body panels and hood.

- Keep a separate rinsing bucket to clean the sponge or washing mitt so that



dirt is not mixed into the clean, sudsy water.

- Consumer Reports suggests using a soft squeegee to remove most of the water on the body of the car after washing and rinsing. Blot up any extra water with a chamois.

- Wax the car every season to ensure it has maximum protection. In between, apply a liquid spray wax to touch up spots. Water beading is not an ideal indicator of whether or not the car needs a coat of wax.

- Don't forget to pay attention to the interior. Vacuum the carpets regularly to prevent ground-in dirt and routinely clean the upholstery with a product specific to your vehicle's interior, whether that interior is leather or fabric.

Protecting a vehicle investment involves keeping the car clean. Know the right ways to help a car or truck look and perform like new.

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## Surprising Factors Impacting Car Buyers' Decisions

(StatePoint) While make and model are still dominant factors on car lots, today's consumers have a new set of priorities, thanks to increasingly sophisticated in-vehicle technologies being offered in new cars.-

From connectivity systems that include voice command controls to technologies that make parking a cinch, today's consumers want more from their rides.

In fact, nearly half of consumers – 48 percent – prioritize in-vehicle technology over brand or body style, according to the 2017 Autotrader Car Tech Impact Study. And they know what they want, too. The study found that consumers these days are researching the exact features they'd like to purchase before visiting the dealership.

“What once seemed like something only for ‘The Jetsons’ is quickly becoming everyday reality in the automotive landscape,” says Brian Moody, executive editor for Autotrader. “And it's not just vehicles with a high price-point. Many mainstream family cars are now equipped

with technology features only seen on top-of-the-line luxury vehicles just a few short years ago.”

Experts say that while consumers should embrace the convenience and enhanced safety offered by new-car technology, they also need to educate themselves so they fully understand what these features can – and just as importantly, what they cannot – do.

“Understanding your car can help you become a better, safer driver,” says Moody.

However, the future may also involve less driving. Self-driving technologies are becoming more sophisticated, affordable and normalized. To that end, a growing number of consumers say they are willing to take a hands-off approach to their cars in the future. Indeed, 49 percent of respondents indicated they'd give up control of their car in exchange for some free time, up from 35 percent in 2016.

*To learn more about today's must-have technology, visit [autotrader.com/MustHaveTech](http://autotrader.com/MustHaveTech).*



Whether you are a parent concerned with the latest safety features, or a Millennial expecting your vehicle's technology to be every bit as robust as your smartphone, get educated about the features that matter to you, before heading to the dealership.



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## Tire maintenance a key component of spring check-up

When warm weather arrives, many people enjoy a collective sigh of relief. Just as people welcome the end of the cold, snow and ice, cars and trucks also can benefit from more moderate temperatures.

Salt, grime and pot holes can take a toll on tires over the course of a typical winter. Drivers will not get far this spring and summer without tires in good repair, which is why tire maintenance should be part of any seasonal repair checklist.

### Inflation levels

Now is the time to use a tire pressure gauge to see if tires are at the ideal inflation levels. Many tires indicate the recommended PSI (pounds per square inch) on their sidewalls. Cold temperatures may cause tires to deflate a little. Esurance states that winter weather can cause tire pressure reduction at about one PSI for every 10 degrees the temperature drops. Driving on improperly inflated tires can be dangerous, potentially affecting handling and braking distances.

Check tires when they are cold for the most accurate reading. Properly inflated tires also will improve fuel economy, so drivers may even save a little money by

inflating their tires.

### Tire rotation/realignment

Examine the tires for tread wear. Any uneven or abnormal tread wear could indicate that the tires need to be rotated and the wheels realigned at the very least. Take the vehicle to a qualified mechanic to get their opinion on how to remedy the situation. Mechanics may recommend rotating tires every 6,000 to 8,000 miles, or about every six months for the average driver.

Wheel realignment may be necessary after a season of driving over potholes and other irregularities in the road. Misaligned wheels can cause handling problems, like the car "pulling" to one side.

### Tire replacement

Drivers may discover extreme tread wear, bulges or even cracks in the sidewall during a tire inspection. These signs indicate that it's time to replace the tires. Failing to replace old, worn down tires can increase the risk of automobile accidents.

### Thorough cleaning

Once tires are inspected and possibly serviced or replaced, treat the car or truck to a washing and thorough detailing. This will help tires shine and get the vehicle road-ready for spring trips.



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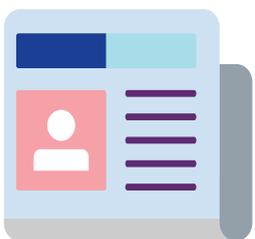
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