

Vehicle inspection tips

ITEM	DAILY	WEEKLY	TIPS
Leak check	As you walk around your vehicle, check underneath it, looking for fluid on the ground or accumulation on components. As you enter your parking spot at work or home, watch for evidence of leaks or damage.		While you are walking around your vehicle, check the vehicle for loose wheel nuts, etc.
Body damage	Look for dents, scrapes and scratches that may have occurred the previous day.		Watch for loose hubcaps or body stripping, rock chips. Note and report them immediately.
Engine oil		Check engine oil weekly.	Consult your owner's manual to confirm the oil you use is the right viscosity if operating in extreme heat or cold.
Windshield washer		Check there is enough washer fluid. Top up as needed.	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.	Never open the coolant reservoir when the coolant is hot.
Brake fluid level		Check reservoir fluid level is within correct operating range.	
Power steering fluid level		Check reservoir fluid level is within correct operating range.	Some newer vehicles are equipped with an electric steering system. These will not have power steering fluid.
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.
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.	
Headlights	Confirm high beams and low beams work.		

Turn signals	Confirm both front and rear signal lights work.		
Hazard/warning lights	Confirm hazards are operational.		
Brake lights	With the vehicle in park, place a heavy object on the brake pedal and confirm the brake lights are working.		It is very important to leave your vehicle in park when doing this check. You can also wedge a window scraper between the seat and the pedal.
Tail lights	Check that tail lights work.		Between regular washes, use a damp cloth to clean dirt and road film from all light lenses.
Tires	Visually confirm tires look to be properly inflated. Check for signs of tire damage or unusual wear. Check for tread separation and depth.	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. Minimum tread depth for front tires is 3 mm, rear tires is 2 mm.
Lug nuts	Visually check that lug nuts appear tight.		Look for shiny spots around the base of the lug nuts that would indicate they have been moving.
Licence plate	Confirm licence plate remains firmly attached and visible.	Ensure licence plate lights work.	
Exhaust leaks	With engine running, look, listen and smell for signs of exhaust leak.		Any smell of exhaust inside the vehicle is cause for concern. If you detect exhaust in the vehicle, get it checked right away.
Spare tire		Use tire gauge to confirm the tire is inflated to recommended pressure.	If you have a full size spare tire, you may want to rotate it into use to achieve even tire wear.
Trailer hitch/fifth wheel (if equipped)	Make sure all pins are locked, chains are crossed and connected, electrical/light cord is plugged in and landing gear is up. For fifth wheels, make sure the jaws are locked and the release handle is in.		
Trailer brakes (if equipped)	If equipped, test the operation of your trailer brakes by rolling ahead and squeezing the hand control. Adjust gain as necessary.		Make sure you don't press the foot brake pedal while conducting this test so, you know which brakes are working.
Trailer breakaway (if equipped)	If equipped, test that the trailer brakes will apply in the event of a breakaway. To do this, place your vehicle in park, disconnect the light cord, then pull out the breakaway pin. Get in the vehicle and attempt to roll forward. The trailer brakes should apply automatically within a few feet. Put the vehicle back in park. Reconnect the breakaway pin, then the light cord.		If you've never done this before, reach out to a trailer sales/rental/repair company for a demonstration. Make sure you don't press the foot brake pedal while conducting this test so you know which brakes are working. Disconnecting the light cord before the breakaway pin is highly recommended to avoid damage to fuses or triggering a computer error.

Emergency equipment	Confirm necessary contents are present, such as fire extinguisher, first aid kit, flares/triangles, blankets, etc.		Check expiry dates and replace items as they expire.
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 collarbone, rather than on neck or shoulder.
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.
Mirrors	Confirm mirrors are clean, free of damage and adjusted for your driving position.		Set your mirrors for optimal rearward visibility.
Windshield	Make sure windshield is clear. Check for rock chips/cracks.		There should be no cracks through both layers of glass, or any intersecting cracks in an area swept by the wipers that extends more than 50 mm, or any bruises/chips greater than 13 mm in diameter in an area swept by the wipers.
Wipers and washers	Confirm wiper controls work, and wiper blades clear the windshield. Test washer sprayer.		Replace wiper blades when you see streaks or gaps in their path. Switch to winter wiper blades in October.
Engine noises	Listen for any unusual sounds (ticks, pings, rattles, knocks).	Listen for new or increasingly loud exhaust sounds.	
Heater/defroster	Check fan and flow direction controls are working well.		It's very important to check the windshield defrost, especially in cold or humid weather. Place your hand over the defrost vent to ensure there is air flow. Run the fan on all speeds.
Steering		Assess the free play and alignment in your steering system to confirm it remains tight (no excess free play).	
Horn	Confirm horn works.		
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.
Brakes	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.	

Parking brake	Test parking brake for operation and holding capacity by engaging the brake, putting the vehicle in gear and attempting to gently tug against it.		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.
Vehicle documents	Always take your drivers licence with you. Have a copy of the registration on board. Fill out your pre-trip inspection form.	Check expiry dates of insurance documents and renew before expiry.	

