



Tire-Pressure & Car-Maintenance Apps — What's Worth It

Tire pressure & maintenance What's worth it, what's overkill An Extended Guide ·
No. 1926

————— An Extended Guide · No. 1926 —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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What's Inside

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1. The 60-Second Version If you only read one page, read this one. Here is the comforting truth to start with: your car already does most of this work for you. Every car built for the US market since the 2008 model year has a tire-pressure monitoring system built in, so a little light on the dashboard warns you the moment a tire gets low. Beyond that, a small handful of free apps can remind you when routine service is due and help you keep good records without any fuss. Most of the fancier gadgets and paid apps you will see advertised are perfectly nice but genuinely not necessary for an ordinary driver. For most of us, simply knowing what the tire light means, keeping a gauge in the glovebox, and using one simple reminder app covers very nearly everything you will ever actually need to stay safe and on top of your car. Your car has watched over your tire pressure since the 2008 model year. A steady dash light means a tire is low — check it when cold. The correct pressure is on the driver's door-jamb sticker, not the tire. A free reminder app like MyCarfax handles maintenance dates for you. Most of the extra gadgets are helpful but far from required. The most genuinely useful tools are free, not the ones with a monthly fee. **WATCH OUT** Set up any app and pair any gadget while safely parked. Never fiddle with your phone or poke at a dashboard setting while the car is actually moving.

THE TIRE LIGHT

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2. The Tire-Pressure Light Explained That little symbol has a clear meaning. The tire-pressure warning light looks like a flattened, sagging tire, or a horseshoe shape with an exclamation point sitting inside it, glowing amber on your dashboard. When it comes on and holds steady, it means at least one of your tires is low on air — usually enough below the proper level that your car has decided you really ought to know about it. It is not a drop-everything emergency, but it is also not something to simply ignore and drive on with for weeks. A low tire wears out unevenly and far faster than it should, it quietly hurts your gas mileage every mile, and in the worst case a badly low tire can fail on you at highway speed. So think of the light as your car doing you a genuine favor, tapping you on the shoulder. Treat it as a gentle nudge to go check your tires soon, not as any reason to pull over in a panic on the shoulder. **GOOD TO KNOW** This whole system is called TPMS, which is just short for tire-pressure monitoring system. It has been required by law on all new US cars since the 2008 model year. **STEADY VS FLASHING** 3. Steady Light vs Flashing Light They mean two different things. There is an important difference between a steady light and a flashing one, and knowing it saves a lot of needless worry. A steady, solid light means exactly what we just covered: a tire is low on air, so go and check and fill your tires when you get a chance. A light that flashes for a little while when you first start the car and then settles into staying steady usually means something quite different — a problem with one of the sensors themselves, rather than necessarily low air in any tire. Here is why: the little sensors tucked inside each wheel run on tiny batteries that eventually wear out after years of service, and that flash-then-steady pattern is very often how the car tells you one of those sensors needs attention. So if you notice that flashing pattern on startup, it is worth having a tire shop check the sensors rather than just adding air. **What the light does** What it usually means Glows steady and solid A tire is low — go check and fill them

CHECK IT COLD

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Flashes, then stays on A sensor may be failing and need service 4. Why You Check Tires Cold Warm tires read falsely high. When you go to check your tire pressure, always do it when the tires are cold — and by cold I simply mean before you have driven much, like first thing in the morning before any errands. Here is exactly why it matters: driving warms the tires up through friction with the road, and warm air naturally expands, so a warm tire will read higher on the gauge than it truly is once it cools back down. If you fill to the right number on a hot tire that has been driven on, it will actually end up under-inflated once it sits and cools off. The proper pressure printed on your car is meant to be measured on cold tires, every time. So the habit is simple and easy: check and fill in the morning before you head out, or after the car has sat parked a good few hours. If you absolutely must check right after driving, just know the reading will run a little high and allow for it. TIP Check your tires first thing in the morning, before you drive anywhere. That's the one time the reading is honest and truly matches the number on the sticker. THE RIGHT NUMBER 5. The Door-Jamb Sticker, Not the Tire One of the most common mix-ups there is. This one trips up a great many good, careful people, so let me be very clear about it. There is a number molded right into the rubber on the side of your tire, and it is natural to assume that is the number you should fill to — but it is not. That number is the maximum pressure the tire is built to hold safely, not the pressure your particular car actually wants. The correct pressure for your car is printed on a little sticker in the driver's door jamb — open the driver's door and look at the metal frame where the door latches shut, and you will find it there. That sticker lists the recommended pressure for your front and rear tires, chosen specifically by the engineers who built your car. Always, always fill to the door-jamb number, not the bigger number stamped on the tire. Filling all the way to the tire's maximum makes for a hard, bouncy, uncomfortable ride and uneven wear down the center of the tread.

WATCH OUT

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The big number on the tire's sidewall is the maximum it can hold, not your target. Always use the smaller number on the door-jamb sticker instead.

FILLING TIRES

6. Filling Your Tires the Easy Way A simple routine anyone can do. Filling your tires is a good deal simpler than most folks fear, and it is well worth learning to do yourself. You need just three things: the door-jamb number to aim for, a tire gauge to measure with, and a source of air — many gas stations have an air pump, and a small home air pump is a genuinely nice thing to own and keep in the garage. Unscrew the little cap on the tire's valve stem, press the gauge firmly onto the valve to read the current pressure, then add air in short bursts, stopping to check with the gauge as you go, until you reach the number from the sticker. If you accidentally overshoot and put in too much, simply press the little pin in the center of the valve for a second to let a bit of air hiss back out. Screw the cap back on snugly, and you are done. Do all four tires, and the warning light on your dash will switch itself off after you drive a short distance.

- 1** Find the right pressure printed on the door-jamb sticker.
 - 2** Unscrew the valve cap on a cold tire first thing in the morning.
 - 3** Press the gauge firmly on to read the current pressure.
 - 4** Add air in short bursts, rechecking until you hit the right number.
 - 5** Screw the cap back on and repeat for all four tires.
- GOOD TO KNOW** After you fill the tires, the dash light may well stay on for a few miles. It usually switches itself off on its own once you drive a little way down the road.

PHONE SENSORS

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7. Bluetooth Tire-Cap Sensors See all four tires on your phone. If you like the idea of being able to see each tire's exact pressure right on your phone at a glance, there are little sensors that screw onto your tire valve stems in place of the ordinary caps. Each one quietly sends a live reading to a free app, so you can check all four tires any time you like, even from your armchair before a trip, and they will chirp a warning at you if one goes low on the road. For someone who tows a trailer, drives long distances regularly, or simply likes the reassurance of keeping a close eye on things, these are genuinely handy little gadgets. For most around-town drivers, though, they are more of a nice extra than a real need, because your car's own built-in system is already quietly watching and will warn you. They cost a modest amount for a set of four, and they are easy enough to screw on yourself in a few minutes. They screw on in place of your ordinary valve caps. They show all four tires at a glance in a free phone app. They chirp a warning at you whenever a tire goes low. Handy for towing and long trips; optional for everyday driving. TIP If you add cap sensors, buy the locking kind or they can be unscrewed and walk off. And still check cold with a real gauge now and then to be sure they're reading true.

OBD APPS

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8. OBD-II Plug-In Apps A window into your engine. Here is something many people do not know: every car built since the mid-1990s has a small diagnostic port tucked up under the dashboard, usually somewhere near your left knee. For a modest price you can buy a little adapter that plugs right into that port and talks to your phone over Bluetooth. Paired with an app like Car Scanner or FIXD, that little adapter lets you read information straight out of the car's own brain — things like exactly why the dreaded check-engine light came on, and sometimes maintenance and performance details too. When that orange engine light suddenly appears and your heart sinks, these apps can often tell you right away whether it is something minor and harmless or something genuinely serious, before you panic or pay a shop just to read the code off for you. For a curious owner who likes to understand their car, it is a reassuring tool to have tucked in the glovebox. A small adapter plugs into the port under your dash, near your knee. Apps like Car Scanner or FIXD read the car's own information. They can tell you exactly why a check-engine light came on. They help you know if a warning is minor or serious before you panic. OBD CAUTION 9. A Caution on Plug-In Adapters Keep it simple and safe. The plug-in adapters are genuinely useful, but a couple of friendly cautions will keep you out of any trouble with them. First, buy a reputable one from a known brand; the very cheapest no-name adapters can behave oddly, give you wrong readings, or in rare cases cause electrical gremlins in a modern car. Second, do not leave a cheap adapter plugged in all the time on some cars, as it can slowly draw on your battery even while the car sits parked; unplug it when you are finished, or use a quality one that is specifically designed to stay plugged in safely. Third, and this is the important one, do read the information it gives you, but do not try to simply clear a check-engine light just to make it disappear — that light came on for a real reason. Use the adapter to understand what is going on, and then let a trusted mechanic actually fix whatever needs fixing.

WATCH OUT**9. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

Clearing a check-engine light doesn't fix the problem — it just hides it from you. Use the app to understand the warning, never to silence it and pretend it's gone. SERVICE REMINDERS 10. Free Service-Reminder Apps Never wonder when the oil is due. The single simplest and most genuinely useful app for most people is a free service reminder, and if you take only one thing from this guide, this might be it. MyCarfax is a well-known free one: you simply tell it what car you have, and it reminds you when an oil change or other routine service is coming due, and it quietly keeps a running history of the service your car has had done. For all the good folks who struggle to remember whether the last oil change was four months ago or closer to eight, and who end up either over-servicing or dangerously under-servicing, this quietly solves the whole problem with no effort. There is no cost at all and very little to set up — just enter your car once. If you only ever install one single car app in your life, a free reminder app like this is the one I would pick for very nearly every driver I meet. GOOD TO KNOW If you want just one car app and nothing more, make it a free service reminder. It solves the single thing most people actually forget — when the service is due.

CARMAKER APPS

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11. Your Carmaker's Own App Often the best info, straight from the source. Most carmakers now offer a free app for your phone that pairs directly with your own specific car, and it is well worth knowing about because it often does more than any gadget you could buy. Depending on your make and model year, it can show you your remaining oil life as a percentage, the exact maintenance schedule the factory recommends, your current tire pressures tire by tire, how much fuel is sitting in the tank, and a good deal more besides — all read straight out of your own vehicle. Because this app comes from the very people who designed and built your car, the information in it is tailored exactly to it rather than guessed at. If your car is from roughly the last decade, it is genuinely worth checking whether your make offers an app, because it very often does, and it often does more for free than anything else. Setting it up just once gives you a tidy little dashboard for your car right there in your pocket. A free app offered by your car's own manufacturer. Shows oil life, the factory maintenance schedule, and often tire pressures. The information is tailored exactly to your specific car. Usually the best first app to try if your car is reasonably recent. **GOOD TO KNOW** Some carmaker apps need a paid connected-services plan for the fancier remote features like remote start, but the basic maintenance information is usually free.

LOG APPS

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12. Fuel and Service Log Apps For the record-keepers among us. If you happen to be the sort of person who genuinely enjoys tracking things and keeping tidy records, there are apps built specifically for keeping a detailed logbook of your car's whole life. Drivvo and Fuely are two popular, well-regarded ones. Each time you fill up at the pump or get any work done at the shop, you jot the details into the app, and over time it quietly builds up a clear picture of your gas mileage, exactly what you have spent on the car, and your complete service history going back years. This is wonderful for anyone who wants to catch a sudden drop in mileage that might signal a developing problem, or who likes having a complete, professional-looking record to hand a buyer when the day comes to sell the car. It does take a little steady discipline to log every single fill-up without fail. If that sounds more like a chore than a pleasure to you, then it is simply not for you — and that is perfectly fine, no guilt required. GOOD TO KNOW A log app is only ever as good as the habit of actually using it. If you'll faithfully enter every fill-up, it's great; if not, a simple reminder app serves you far better. WHAT'S WORTH IT 13. What's Genuinely Worth It The honest, no-nonsense verdict. Let me cut straight through all of it with a plain, honest verdict, the kind I would give a neighbor over the fence. For the ordinary everyday driver, the things that are genuinely worthwhile are the simple ones, and most of them happen to be free. Understand your tire light and what it is telling you. Keep a decent tire gauge in the glovebox and actually use it. And install one free reminder app — either your carmaker's own app or something like MyCarfax. Everything else is strictly optional and situational. Bluetooth tire sensors are handy if you tow or travel far from home. A plug-in OBD adapter is reassuring if a check-engine light tends to scare you half to death. Log apps are a pleasure for the natural record-keepers among us. But none of these extras are needed to be a safe, responsible, well-cared-for driver. Spend nothing, do the simple basics faithfully, and you are in genuinely good shape. Tool Worth it for...

OVERKILL

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Carmaker app or MyCarfax Just about everyone — and it's free A tire gauge in the glovebox Everyone, without exception Bluetooth tire sensors Towing and long trips An OBD plug-in app The check-engine-curious 14. What's Usually Overkill You can safely skip these. On the other side of the ledger, plenty of gadgets and apps out there are far more than most drivers genuinely need, and it is worth naming them plainly so you do not feel pressured. You do not need a subscription service that charges you every single month to tell you things your free carmaker app already shows you for nothing. You do not need the most elaborate OBD system with dozens of swirling gauges and graphs unless you truly enjoy that level of detail as a hobby. You do not need tire sensors at all if your car already warns you and you are good about checking them with a gauge now and again. The slick marketing around all of this can quietly make you feel as though you are being careless or irresponsible without every last gadget, but that simply is not true and never has been. A gauge, a reminder app, and a little attention to your dashboard lights will keep you and your car perfectly healthy for years. **WATCH OUT** Be wary of any car app that charges a monthly fee just for basic information. Your free carmaker app, or a one-time gauge, usually does the exact same job for nothing.

SPARE & KIT

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15. The Low-Tech Essentials Some things no app replaces. Amid all this talk of apps and sensors and Bluetooth, let me put in a strong word for the plain, low-tech basics that matter far more than any gadget on the day something actually goes wrong. Keep a decent tire gauge in the car where you can find it. Know where your spare tire is stowed, and know whether your car even came with a real spare or just a can of sealant and an air pump instead, because many newer ones did. Keep a flashlight, a pair of gloves, and a warm blanket in the trunk, especially heading into an Ohio winter where a breakdown can turn serious fast. These humble things will serve you well on the day a tire goes flat on a cold, dark back road, when no app in the whole world will put air back in that tire for you.

Technology is a fine helper, but a flat tire is still fixed with your own hands and a bit of sensible preparation done ahead of time. A good tire gauge kept somewhere handy in the glovebox. Know where your spare tire or repair kit is actually stowed. A flashlight, gloves and a warm blanket for an Ohio winter. A small home air pump is a genuinely worthwhile buy for the garage. BATTERY 16. Battery and Cold-Weather Helpers Winter is hard on batteries. Ohio winters are notoriously tough on car batteries — those bitter cold mornings are precisely when a weak, tired battery finally gives up the ghost and leaves you stranded in a frozen parking lot. Some OBD apps and a few small plug-in devices can keep a quiet eye on your battery's health and warn you before it dies completely, which beats discovering the hard way on the coldest morning of the year. Honestly, though, a quality battery charger or a compact jump-starter pack that lives in the trunk is arguably more valuable than any app, because it actually gets you going again right there on the spot without waiting for anyone. If your car has started to crank slowly or hesitate on cold mornings, that is your battery quietly asking for attention, and it is well worth having it tested before the deep cold truly sets in, rather than after it has already left you stuck.

TIP**14. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

If your car cranks slowly or hesitates on cold mornings, get the battery tested before winter deepens. A dying battery almost always warns you first — so listen for it. **SETUP 17.**

Setting Up Your Phone Once A quiet half hour sets you up for good. If you do decide to use an app or two, the smart move is to set them all up in one calm sitting while you are safely parked at home, rather than piecemeal over weeks. Download your carmaker's app and sign in with an account, or install a free reminder app and enter your car's details. If you have bought yourself a tire sensor set or a little OBD adapter, pair it to your phone following the instructions that came with it, one step at a time. Enter your car's year, make and model just once so the apps know your particular oil-change schedule and specifications. After that is all done, the apps simply run quietly in the background and give you a gentle nudge when something is due, asking nothing more of you. This is very much a one-time chore that then takes care of itself for good, and it is exactly the kind of setup I am happy to sit down and do right alongside you.

- 1** While parked at home, download your carmaker app or MyCarfax.
- 2** Enter your car's year, make and model once.
- 3** Pair any tire sensors or OBD adapter you've bought to the phone.
- 4** Turn on reminders so the app nudges you when service is due.

PRIVACY**15. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

18. What These Apps Know About You A fair question worth a plain answer. It is entirely fair to wonder what a car app actually knows about you and where it all goes, and you deserve a plain answer. Most of these apps want to know what car you have and sometimes where you are, so they can offer you nearby service suggestions or keep track of your trips in a log. Carmaker apps are tied to an account you set up with the manufacturer. None of this is sinister or out to get you, but if privacy genuinely matters to you, there are sensible steps: stick to reputable, well-known apps, read what permissions each one asks for before you tap agree, and turn off location sharing if you do not want or need it. A simple service-reminder app needs very little about you at all to do its job. As always, the big, established names from your carmaker or a well-known company are far safer bets than some unknown app that is asking for a great deal more access than it could possibly need. **GOOD TO KNOW** If an app asks for permissions that have nothing to do with cars — like your contacts or your photos — that's a good reason to be cautious and simply pick a different one. **MILEAGE** 19. Saving Gas Without Any App Good habits beat gadgets here. A whole category of apps promises to improve your gas mileage, but I will tell you honestly that the biggest savings by far come from plain old habits, no app required at all. Properly inflated tires — and there is that door-jamb number again, doing quiet work — save you real money over the course of a year, because an under-inflated tire drags and burns extra fuel on every trip. Gentle, gradual acceleration and easy, early braking help a great deal. Not hauling around a trunk full of heavy things you do not actually need helps too. Keeping up faithfully with your oil changes and a clean air filter helps. An app can certainly show you the numbers and your trends, which some people find genuinely motivating, and there is no harm in that. But no app on earth can press the gas pedal gently for you. If saving money at the pump is truly your goal, start with the free habits long before you ever buy anything.

WHEN TO SEE A SHOP

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20. When an App Isn't Enough Know the line between info and repair. These apps are wonderful tools for staying informed and on top of things, but it is important to be clear-eyed that they are not mechanics and never will be. An app can tell you that the check-engine light is pointing to a particular sensor, but it cannot reach in and replace that sensor for you. It can remind you faithfully that an oil change is now due, but it cannot drain the old oil and pour in the new. The right way to think about it is that the apps are your dashboard and the shop is your repair bay — two different places for two different jobs. If a warning light is flashing rather than steady, if the car has started making a new noise you have not heard before, if it is handling strangely or pulling to one side, or if an app flags something it calls serious, that is precisely the time to see a mechanic you trust. The app's real job is to help you catch a problem early and talk about it knowledgeably, not to fix it.

WATCH OUT A flashing check-engine light, unlike a steady one, usually signals a serious problem. Get the car to a shop soon rather than driving on and hoping it sorts itself out.

KEEP IT SIMPLE 21. My Simple Recommendation The whole guide in one small plan. If you want this whole guide boiled right down to something you can remember, here it is in a nutshell. Learn what your tire light is telling you, and check your tires cold, to the door-jamb number, roughly once a month. Install one free app — either your carmaker's own or something like MyCarfax — for the service reminders so you never have to wonder when the oil is due. Keep a tire gauge and a few winter basics tucked in the car. That truly is it. That simple little plan keeps most drivers safe, informed, and well clear of surprise trouble, and it costs you nothing at all. Add a tire sensor or an OBD adapter only if you have a specific, real reason to want one, not just because an ad made it sound essential. There is genuine peace of mind to be found in keeping the whole thing refreshingly simple. Check your tires cold, about monthly, to the door-jamb number. Install one free reminder app and enter your car once. Keep a gauge and a few winter basics tucked in the trunk. Add gadgets only for a specific real need, never just because.

WHAT PSI MEANS**17. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

22. What Those Numbers Actually Mean PSI in plain English. When you look at your tire pressure, the number comes with the letters PSI after it, and that simply stands for pounds per square inch — a measure of how much air is packed into the tire, pushing outward. You do not need to understand the physics of it; you only need to know that a typical car tire wants somewhere in the low-to-mid thirties, and your door-jamb sticker tells you the exact right number for your car. A higher PSI means a firmer, harder tire; a lower PSI means a softer, flatter one. Too soft and the tire drags, wears, and runs hot. Too firm and the ride turns stiff and the tread wears unevenly. The sweet spot the carmaker chose balances a comfortable ride, good grip, long tire life, and the best gas mileage. So the whole job is simply keeping each tire at its sticker number, and PSI is just the unit you measure it in. GOOD TO KNOW PSI just means pounds per square inch — how much air is in the tire. Most car tires want somewhere in the low-to-mid thirties, but always go by your door-jamb sticker. COLD WEATHER 23. Why Winter Drops Your Pressure The light loves a cold snap. Here in Ohio, that tire light has a habit of popping on during the first real cold snap of the season, and it catches people off guard every year. There is a simple reason: air shrinks as it gets cold. When the temperature drops sharply overnight, the air inside your tires contracts and the pressure falls, sometimes enough to trip the warning light even though you have no leak at all. The fix is just to top the tires back up to the sticker number on a cold morning. The reverse happens too — a warm spell can nudge the pressure back up. So do not be alarmed when the light appears on that first frosty morning; it is usually just the cold doing its thing. Check and fill, and you are set. But do check, because a tire that was already a little low can dip into genuinely unsafe territory once winter bites down.

TIP**18. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

Expect the tire light on the first hard cold snap each fall — cold air shrinks and the pressure drops. Just top the tires up to the sticker number on a cold morning. **THE SPARE 24.** Don't Forget the Spare The one tire the light can't see. Here is a tire that gets forgotten more than any other: the spare, tucked away in the trunk or slung under the back of the car. Your dashboard warning light watches the four tires on the road, but on most cars it has no idea at all what is happening with the spare. A spare tire slowly loses air over months and years just sitting there, so the cruel irony is that the day you finally need it, after a flat on a rainy back road, you may haul it out only to find it is soft and useless too. The cure is simple: once or twice a year, check the spare's pressure along with the others. Its correct pressure is often listed on the same door-jamb sticker, and compact 'donut' spares usually want quite a high number. A good spare is only good if it actually holds air when the day comes. **WATCH OUT** Your dashboard light can't see the spare tire. Check it once or twice a year, or you may find it flat on the very day you finally need it. **TREAD & WEAR 25.** Keeping an Eye on Tread Air is only half the story. Pressure keeps a tire healthy, but the tread — those grooves in the rubber that grip the road — is what actually keeps you from sliding, and it wears down slowly over the years. Worn, bald tread is genuinely dangerous on wet or snowy Ohio roads, where the grooves are what channel water and slush away so the tire can hold on. There is an old, reliable trick for checking it: stick a penny into a tread groove with Lincoln's head pointing down into the tire. If you can see the top of his head, the tread is worn too far and it is time for new tires. It costs nothing and takes a moment. Keeping your tires properly inflated actually helps them wear evenly and last longer, so the pressure habit and the tread habit go hand in hand. If a tire is wearing oddly — more on one edge than the other — that can point to an alignment issue worth having checked.

ROTATION

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Tread is the grooved rubber that grips the road and channels water.

Check it with a penny — Lincoln's head down into the groove. If you can see the top of his head, it's time for new tires. Proper pressure helps tires wear evenly and last longer. 26. Rotating Tires and Why It Helps Spread the wear around. Tires do not all wear at the same rate — the ones doing the steering and the ones carrying the engine tend to wear faster than the others. Rotating them, which simply means moving each tire to a different position on a regular schedule, spreads that wear around evenly so the whole set lasts longer and you get your money's worth. Most shops do it quickly and cheaply, often free when you are already there for an oil change, and your carmaker's app or a reminder app can tell you when it is due. This is one of those quiet bits of maintenance that saves real money over the life of a car without any drama. If you are the record-keeping sort, a log app is handy for tracking when the last rotation was, so you neither forget it nor pay for one you do not need yet. TIP Have your tires rotated when you get an oil change — it's often quick and cheap, and it makes the whole set of tires last noticeably longer. OTHER LIGHTS 27. A Quick Tour of Other Dash Lights Know which ones mean stop now. While we are on the subject of dashboard lights, it helps to know the handful that matter most, because not all of them mean the same thing. A steady check-engine light means have it looked at soon, but you can usually drive on carefully. A flashing check-engine light means a more serious problem, so ease off and get it seen quickly. The oil-pressure light, shaped like a little oil can, is the serious one — if it comes on, stop safely and shut the engine off, because running without oil pressure can ruin an engine fast. The battery light means the charging system needs attention. And of course our friend the tire light. An OBD app can read the details behind a check-engine light, but the color is a good quick guide: amber generally means caution and attention soon, while red generally means stop and deal with it now.

OIL LIFE

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Light What to do Steady check-engine Have it looked at soon Flashing check-engine Ease off, get it seen quickly Oil-pressure (oil can) Stop safely and shut off the engine 28.

Understanding the Oil-Life Monitor The percentage that puzzles people. Many cars show an oil-life percentage, either on the dash or in the carmaker's app, and it puzzles a lot of folks, so let me explain it plainly. The oil-life monitor is not actually measuring the oil itself; it is a clever calculation based on how you drive — how many miles, how hard, hot or cold, lots of short trips or long highway runs. It counts down from one hundred percent toward zero, and when it gets low, it is telling you an oil change is due soon. It is genuinely more accurate than the old rule of changing oil every three thousand miles no matter what, because it accounts for your actual driving. When it reaches a low number or the app nudges you, that is your cue to book an oil change. Resetting the monitor after a change is usually done at the shop, or you can do it yourself in the dash menu or the app. GOOD TO KNOW The oil-life percentage is a smart estimate based on how you actually drive, not a direct test of the oil. When it drops low, it's simply telling you a change is due soon.

PAIRING

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29. Pairing a Gadget by Bluetooth Simpler than it sounds. If you buy a tire sensor set or an OBD adapter, you will need to pair it to your phone by Bluetooth, and I know that word makes some folks nervous — but it is genuinely simpler than it sounds. Bluetooth is just the way two nearby devices talk to each other wirelessly, like your phone and a hearing aid or a wireless speaker. To pair a gadget, you download its app, turn on Bluetooth in your phone's settings, and follow the app's prompts, which usually means tapping the gadget's name when it pops up on the screen. You only ever have to do this pairing once; after that, the phone and the gadget recognize each other automatically every time. If a sensor or adapter ever seems to stop talking to the phone, the fix is usually just to make sure Bluetooth is still switched on. It is a one-time setup, and it is exactly the kind of small thing I am happy to walk you through.

- 1 Download the gadget's app from your phone's app store.

- 2 Turn on Bluetooth in your phone's settings.
 - 3 Open the app and follow its prompts to find the gadget.
 - 4 Tap the gadget's name when it appears — you only pair once.
- RECORDS 30. Keeping Records for Resale** Good records are money in the bank. There is a quietly practical reason to keep good maintenance records beyond simply staying organized: when the day comes to sell or trade in your car, a complete, tidy service history is worth real money. A buyer who can see that the oil was changed on schedule, the tires rotated, and the recommended services kept up will trust the car more and pay more for it. A service-history app like MyCarfax, or a log app where you have faithfully recorded every oil change and repair, hands you that whole story at the tap of a button, which is far better than digging through a shoebox of faded paper receipts. Even if you plan to keep the car forever, good records help you and your mechanic spot patterns and catch problems early. It is a small habit that pays off both along the way and at the very end of the car's life with you.

TIP

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A complete service history makes a used car easier to sell and worth more. Let an app keep the records so you're not hunting through a shoebox of old receipts later. **A GAUGE BEATS A GUESS 31.** Why a Simple Gauge Still Wins The humblest tool is the most trustworthy. With all the Bluetooth sensors and clever apps we have talked about, it is easy to overlook the humblest and most trustworthy tool of them all: a simple, inexpensive tire gauge. A gauge never needs a battery, never loses its connection, never asks you to update an app, and never gives you a reading you cannot trust. You press it on the valve, you read the number, and that is the honest truth about that tire. The fancier gadgets are wonderful for convenience and for catching a slow leak between checks, but they do not replace the quiet reliability of putting a real gauge on a cold tire now and again to be sure. I tell everyone to keep a decent gauge in the glovebox and actually use it once a month. It costs a few dollars, it lasts for years, and it is the one tire tool I would never want to be without. Sometimes the old, simple thing really is the best thing. **TIP** Keep a real tire gauge in the glovebox and use it monthly. It needs no battery, no app, and no connection — it just tells you the honest truth about each tire.

GET HELP

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32. When to Call Bill I'll get you set up without the fuss. If all these apps feel confusing, or you simply are not sure which ones, if any, you actually need, that is perfectly normal and nothing to feel bad about — and you certainly do not have to sort it all out alone at the kitchen table. I can sit right down with you and your phone, set up your carmaker's app or a simple reminder app, pair up a tire sensor or a diagnostic adapter if you happen to have one, and patiently show you how to read your tire light and fill your tires with real confidence so it never rattles you again. With more than thirty years of helping good folks with exactly this kind of thing, I keep it plain, calm and unhurried, and I promise I will never once try to talk you into some gadget you do not need. Give me a call at (330) 200-8042 and Sophie will find a time that suits you. I serve folks all over Portage County, and every bit of my work comes with a friendly guarantee — if it is not right, we simply make it right.

CHEAT SHEET Everyday Cheat Sheet Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task. I want to... Do this

My low-pressure light came on Check pressure when tires are cold The light is flashing then steady A sensor may need service I want to know the right pressure Read the door-jamb sticker I want pressure on my phone Bluetooth tire-cap sensors I want to read engine info An OBD-II app like Car Scanner I want free service reminders MyCarfax I want to track fuel and repairs A log app like Fuely I just want the basics Your car's own app is enough Get help Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

HOW I CAN HELP**24. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

Your Visit — and My Promise In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included. Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo). GOOD TO KNOW My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated. Call or text (330) 200-8042 · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

When the tire light comes on

Calm steps, in order.

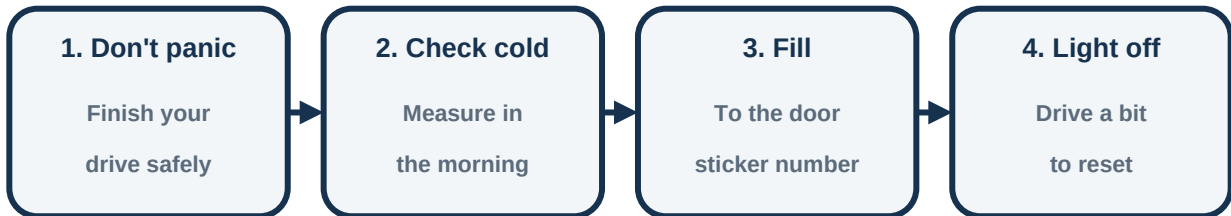


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

A schematic of the plan — company steps vary; the order does not have to.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

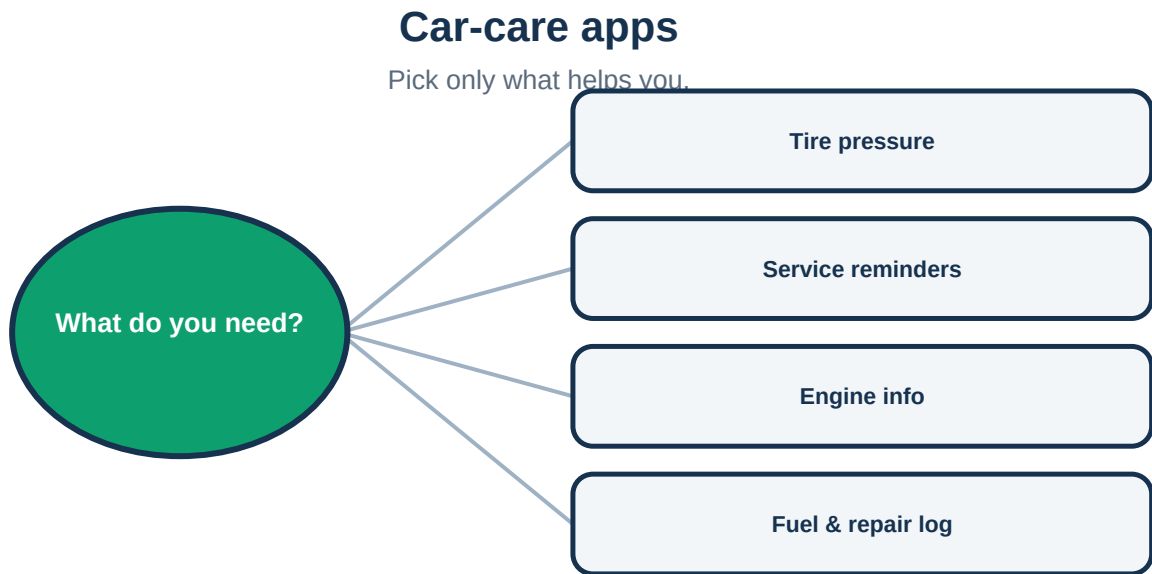


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: **billshometech.com/book** · **bill@billshometech.com**

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