

MAINTENANCE



TIRES - HOW TO CHOOSE AND CARE FOR THEM

On a recent trip with my brother we had a flat tire and decided it was time to replace all four. It was during the trip to the tire store that I realized most everyone who came in the store did so without previous tire knowledge and may have made a different decision if they had only known some tire basics. When your tread is getting low what do you do? If you're like most motorists you go to the tire store and after a short talk with a salesperson you choose a set of tires, they install them, and you're on your way. Have you ever wondered if you are getting the right tire for where and how you drive? The tire salesperson can give great advice but a little of your own tire knowledge can give some self assurance. Here are some tips I hope you find helpful the next time you need tires.

WHEN SHOULD TIRES BE REPLACED?

Tires have wear bars on them that indicate a minimum tread depth. These wear bars are placed across the tread at several locations and are about 2/32 in height. When the tread wears down to the level of these bars the tires must be replaced. Another quick test is to place a penny into the tread. If you can see the top of Lincoln's head it's time to head to the tire store. This is the minimum safe tread depth of a tire in good weather conditions, when you drive in bad weather, the less tread you have on the tire the easier it is for the tire to trap water between it and the road and be lifted off of it resulting in an out of control condition called hydroplaning. If your budget allows replacing your tires before they reach this point you can greatly increase the tires ability to do its job. Did you



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know tires have an expiration date? Well they don't really expire but they do have a date on them, and like most rubber parts, will go bad with age.

Tires that have cracks along the side wall and are five or more years old should be replaced.

WHAT IF I WEAR OUT JUST TWO TIRES?

If you find yourself in need of just two tires mount the newest two on the front. Tires must be the same size on all wheels or handling problems can result causing a dangerous condition. On some vehicles having new tires on one axle and almost worn out tires on another can cause an issue with ABS Brakes or Four Wheel Drive Systems. You should always try to match the tires as closely as possible on all corners.

HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT TIRE FOR YOU.

Choose a tire for your driving location and habits.

Do you drive in heavy snow or mud? Do you travel on the highway and want more control in the rain? Do you drive on ice or hard snow pack, or are you a high mileage driver? All of these will play a role in your tire choice.

Tires are rated by their performance in different conditions by a letter rating. Most all season tires will have a good balance between wet/dry traction, tread life, even noise. If you are a highway traveler and want more control in wet conditions then a rain rated tire is a good choice. Rain tires usually have deeper tread depth and channels in the tread to move the water away from the tire as quickly as possible to keep the tread in contact with the road. If you drive mostly in town at lower speeds and take an occasional road trip an all season tire

leaning toward wet/ice traction is a good choice. Tires that have good traction on ice will have more siping on the tread to grip the ice. Siping is the grooves cut into the blocks of the tread. The more siping of the tread blocks the more surface area there is to grip the ice. While siping greatly increases your grip on ice and hard snow it lowers the tread life some. Those who drive an even combination of all conditions will benefit from an all season tire with equal performance in all areas.

SNOW TIRES.

Have you thought about an all out snow tire?

Snow tires are much different from all season tires. They have deep, soft, tread with large spacing between the lugs to clear the snow quickly and lots of siping to grip the ice. A snow tire is like no other for winter driving giving you amazing traction in our area but there are things to consider. A snow tire will usually last about two seasons before replacement is needed.

They have to be removed during non winter months and stored. You can have the tires mounted on your wheels or buy a second set and save the mount/dismount costs each year. If you are thinking about having custom wheels installed save the old wheels if snow tires are in your future.

HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR TIRES.

How you care for your tires plays a big role in how long they last. Things like alignment, air pressure, balancing, rotating, and even how you drive can



increase tire life. When tires are installed, have the alignment checked and repaired if needed. Not only will it prevent excess tire wear but it helps with safety by way of better handling. Check your tires at least monthly and more often when the outside temp is changing frequently. When the temperature drops so does air pressure and the lower pressure equals less fuel mileage and more tire wear. One way to lessen the pressure change is by using nitrogen to fill the tires. The down side? You will need to have them checked and filled at a tire shop that uses nitrogen. Tires should be rotated about every 5,000 miles for even tread wear. If not rotated you will wear out either the front or rear much faster than the other causing you to have to replace just those two prematurely.

When you drive think about your tires. Tires are your lifeline to the road, they keep you and your passengers safe and carry you to your destinations. Watch the curbs and give them a little attention and you will share a mutual happiness throughout the tires life.

If you have a question about vehicles and how their parts work, write Russ by emailing help@underthehoodshow.com. Visit our web site underthehoodshow.com. ^{TMM}