Classic car maintenance tips to get back on the road after winter storage.



If you're like most classic car owners, you've been counting the days until you can release your beloved ride from its winter storage prison and get behind the wheel. Before you hit the road, however, it's important to follow these pre-season maintenance tips.

Do a thorough inspection — outside, inside, and underneath:

- **Walk all around your vehicle** and check for dings, scratches, or other damage that may have occurred during storage.
- **Check the tires** for any cracks, bulges, or balding areas. If you slightly overinflated or removed the tires before storage (as recommended in our earlier blog, How to Winterize a Classic Car), they shouldn't have any flat spots from being in storage. Check the air pressure to make sure they're properly inflated.
- **Check the battery** terminals for corrosion. You should have disconnected the battery before storage; if you used a battery tender, it should still be adequately charged. You can check the charge level with a multimeter to make sure.
- **Check beneath the car** for fluids that may have leaked and note the location of any leaks you find.
- **Check all hoses and wiring** for signs of wear, deterioration, or damage from rodents.
- **Check oil** and other fluid levels.
- **Check all brake components and shocks** or have them inspected by a professional mechanic.

Test the brakes by gently pressing the brake pedal and noting any sponginess or odd noises that persist after a few minutes.
- **Test electrical components** like headlights, taillights, turn signals, wipers, and the horn to be sure they all work properly.
- **Check the interior of the car** for mold or mildew, as well as evidence of rodents (chewed or shredded upholstery or carpeting, droppings, etc.).
- **Check the tailpipe** to be sure it is clear of debris.

Perform necessary repairs and maintenance:

- **Address any issues your inspection has revealed.** For instance, replace worn tires or wipers, replace bulbs in lights, or have leaks repaired.
- **Change the oil** and top off any other fluids that need replenishing (coolant, brake fluid, power steering fluid, transmission fluid, or windshield washer fluid).
- **Wash and wax the car** and clean the interior.
- **Inflate tires** to the manufacturer's recommended pressure if they are low.

Take a test drive:

- **First, start the engine and let it warm up gradually.** Note any odd noises or vibrations.
- **Next, go for a short, easy test drive** — don't try to break any speed records. Take note of any steering or handling issues, rattles and squeaks, or other unusual conditions.
- **Take your phone with you** in case you experience a breakdown and need to call for help.

Take your car to a professional mechanic:

- **Tell them about any concerns** you may have noted during your inspection and test drive.
- **Have them perform any maintenance tasks** listed above that you didn't do yourself.
- **Have them check:**
    - Spark plugs
    - Cylinders
    - PCV and fuel filters
    - Brakes and shocks

Now you're ready to cruise! But remember, while summer weather is less damaging to your vintage vehicle than the ravages of a Northeast winter, you still need to protect it from moisture, sea salt, and too much direct sunlight. For tips on protecting your classic car in warm weather, read our blog, How to Protect a Classic Car in Summer.

And for those unexpected mishaps you couldn't plan for, make sure you have an auto insurance policy designed specifically for classic cars.

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