

Car Maintenance 101: Checking Your Braking Components



Action movie cliché (that works oddly well, might I add): hero gets into his car, drives off, and rapidly approaches a cliff only to realize that his brake lines have been sabotaged by the bad guy. He jumps off of his moving vehicle, miraculously escaping with just a few bruises and a limp, and his car zooms off of the cliff and tumbles, causing a huge explosion.

While this occurrence may be pretty rare in real life, it makes of you think of how important your car's brakes are. You already know that your braking system is one of the most important auto systems installed in your vehicle, but when was the last time you actually inspected your numerous brake components?

When driving, you use your brakes everyday. If you're a new driver, you probably use your brakes a lot more than you really have to.

The **older your vehicle gets, the longer it usually takes before your brakes kick in**. Sometimes you have to depress on your brake pedal extra-hard or pump it several times just to come to a complete stop. If these are some of the symptoms that you experience when braking, then there's a high chance that some of your braking system's components are in need of adjustment, repair or replacing.

To prevent any future accidents caused by brake-failure, remember to **check your brakes twice a year** and to look for signs of damage and wear. Catching damage before it becomes too costly can help save you money, and more importantly, can save your life as well.

Most vehicles should allow you to inspect their braking systems without having to remove the wheel. If you're currently driving with alloy wheels, then you can simply peep through its holes to check out your braking connections. Whether you're going to be doing some "peep-work" or you have to remove your wheels to access your components, the important thing is to have **a clear view of the large shiny brake disc and your brake pads.**

When you check out your brake disc, look for signs of wear or damage. It should be shiny from its outer edge, right to the inside. If there are slight scratches, then these signs of damage can be dismissible. If, however, you're looking at huge dents, corrosion spots or bumps, then you need to have your **brake disc removed and replaced as soon as possible.** When replacing one brake disc, it pays to replace the other one as well. Replace your damaged brake discs to improve your vehicle's safety and drivability.

Next, have a look at your brake lines. Brake lines are generally made to be pliant and soft. **If your current brake lines are rigid and are sporting cracks, then they need to be replaced.** Check out the metal lines as well. See any signs of corrosion? If you do, then that's another indication that it's time to replace your brake lines.

Lastly, you'll need to check out your brake pads. As for your pads, you'll have to exert more effort to see them. Peek up to see the top of your brake disc, and there you'll find the outside of the pad touching the disc. **If there's just 1/8 of an inch remaining on the brake pad, then you need to replace the pad immediately.** If you're worried about costs, then you'll be glad to know that brake pads can be pretty cheap, especially if you buy them from the right auto parts shop.

Never underestimate the importance of correct and regular auto maintenance. If you see any problems with your brakes and braking components that needs addressing, don't put it off for weeks. It's better to be safe than to compromise your safety and that of your loved ones' as well.

Source: <http://automechanics.wordpress.com/2008/08/30/car-maintenance-101-checking-your-braking-components/>