

HOW LONG CAN YOUR CAR STAY ON THE ROAD?

In these tough times, most of us are looking to get more miles out of everything – especially our cars. Replacing your car is a huge expense, and if you upgrade to a newer model it is possible your insurance rates will reflect the increased value. But no one wants to be driving an unreliable or unsafe car, so it is important to do what you can to prolong the life of your car. Regular maintenance, including oil change services, is one of the things you have the most control over to keep your car safely and reliably on the road for as long as possible.

Keeping your car in good shape does matter. When you get an oil change, it's a good time to remember to check your tire pressure and look for any worn hoses or other parts. Replacing them before they break will spare your car the damage of overheating or otherwise breaking down. Once one part goes, it can start a chain reaction and destroy more parts. Don't try to save money by delaying a regular service because having the appropriate amount of clean oil in the engine helps it run better, which means less wear and tear so it can keep going for longer.

Avoid driving in extreme conditions when possible. You do need to get where you are going, but if you are taking a road trip where you might encounter difficult conditions such as extreme weather or steep or rugged terrain, talk to your

mechanic about how your car might fare on the journey. If you have an older car with high mileage and are trying to delay replacing it, it might make more sense to rent a car for once-off difficult journeys. If you do take your own car, it is well worth having it serviced before you go and carrying extra water and oil.

You can also reduce wear and tear on your car by using it less every day. If you can walk for certain errands, it will not only spare your car, it will save you money and improve your health. It isn't always possible for a variety of reasons, but when it is, it makes sense. Ask yourself is the school really too far to walk the kids there? Is it really necessary to drive to the dentist or other appointments? Can you walk to the local mini mart to get that carton of milk?

Many factors about the lifespan of your car are beyond your control. Some makes and models last longer than others. If you work across town from your house, walking isn't realistic. But when you can control some factors and prolong the life of your car, it just makes sense. Even if you are planning to purchase a newer car, keeping your current one in good shape will only help its resale value. Regular maintenance is the main thing – get an oil change at the recommended times, keep an eye on tire pressure, rotate your tires and replace worn parts before they completely break.

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