

Keepin' 'em Rollin'

Handy Hints and Timely Tips on Car Care
A Free Service of Gallagher's Auto Service

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Keeping Your Car or Truck Running Longer – and Better

Volume I

To Buy or Not to Buy

By Emmet Robinson

After the cost of your home – and your kids' educations – your car or truck will be the largest single investment you'll ever make. The purpose of this publication is to help you keep your vehicle rolling longer – and better. Why? Because it's cheaper that way!

In these interesting times, it's useful to consider the cost of your personal transportation – measured over the long term. Unless your job or social position requires you to drive something of recent vintage, you can run your current set of wheels for twenty years or more – and save a lot of money in the process. I know this from experience.

In 1987, I needed a van for my business and bought a full-size GMC with a 5 liter V-8 engine. From day one, it was maintained right here at Gallagher's Auto Service. After the monthly payments to GMC ended five years later, I continued to drive that beast for another fifteen years – payment free. Over twenty years, it never failed to start. All it took was regular preventative maintenance by experts.

What I concentrated on was the cost per month. When I included gas, insurance, tires, batteries, scheduled service and the occasional repair, my monthly expenses were substantially less than payments on a new truck.

The new cars are certainly appealing. We all love the look – and the smell – of a new car. And it's exciting to buy one. Before you do that, however, consider whether it might be cheaper to keep the old bucket of bolts on the road for a few more years. What you save in keeping your current car running could be the down payment on a new one – when it finally becomes necessary, several years from now.

Are Your Tires Tired?

Smaller cars seem to need new tires less often than heavier vehicles. In cases where a car isn't used very often, a set of tires can last for several years. At least it can seem that way. Although the tread may look good, check the sidewalls for cracks. They occur as a result of the combined effects of time, temperature, weather conditions and pollutants in the air. Sidewall cracks are a sign that the tire has reached the end of its useful life. Although the tread may meet specifications, the weakened sidewall can blow out suddenly. In local driving at modest speeds, that may only cause you an inconvenience. At highway speeds, a sudden tire failure can mean disaster for you – and your passengers. Don't know what to look for? We do. Stop in any time.

Maintenance – When to Do What

Between new car specifications and advances in petroleum products, there is some confusion about when to change the oil in your car.

Oil changes serve an important purpose. In normal operation, the friction between the many moving parts of a car engine creates microscopic particles of metal. As these abrasive particles accumulate in the oil, they circulate throughout the engine and accelerate wear. The best way to prevent extra engine wear is with regularly scheduled oil changes.

Although some new vehicles suggest long intervals between changes, we don't. Regardless of the type of oil in the engine, wear still occurs and metal particles accumulate. Changing the oil – and the filter – removes the harmful

metal particles and reduces engine wear. To keep your car running longer and better, have your oil changed every 3000 miles – or every 6000 miles when using synthetic oil.

While you're at it, have your transmission fluid changed every 10,000 miles to keep your gears changing smoothly much longer.

Stretching the Mileage

While cost of gasoline continues to fluctuate, we know it'll never be cheap again. At current prices, the average fuel cost for a car or small truck might be about 15 cents per mile. With that in mind, here are some inside secrets on how to get more miles per gallon.

- Know where you're going – and how to get there. For your regular trips to work or around town, are there shorter ways of getting to where you need to be? Are you using the most fuel-efficient route or just the one you're used to? A quick check of a local map might help you to find a better way.

For longer trips, main highways and interstates may prove best for the bulk of the trip because they're more direct. Once you've reached the local area, use GPS, Map Quest – or a current local street map. Planning all of this before leaving home will make your trip both more pleasant and more economical.

Keep in mind also that when you first start a cold engine, the ecm will provide a richer fuel mixture than a fully warm engine requires. If you're making a series of short runs, try to bunch them all together so that your engine stays warm during your brief stops. Your fuel mix will be lean, and you'll save money.

- Stay pumped up by maintaining correct tire pressure. Soft – or over-inflated tires will cost you money – not only in wasted fuel, but in additional tire wear.

- Tune up. An engine in proper tune runs more efficiently and will save you money.

- Avoid stacking stuff on the roof. The aerodynamic drag costs fuel and money.

- Good driving habits are an easy, simple way of getting more miles from a tank of gasoline. Here are some suggestions:

1. Avoid speeding up suddenly. Sudden acceleration costs cash.
2. Brake smoothly. Stomping on the brakes at the last second keeps your engine running at higher RPM longer – and uses more gas.
3. Avoid driving over the posted speed limit – regardless of what other drivers are doing. Mileage tends to decrease at speeds of over 55 mph.
4. Allowing ample time for all trips will help you to follow the preceding three suggestions.

Cheap Insurance

The cheapest auto insurance policy is one where you don't have any crashes and make claims.

One of the cheapest ways of avoiding crashes is by making sure you can see where you're going. Worn-out windshield wipers on a dirty windshield can make a bad situation worse – especially if you're driving into the sun. When you notice that the wipers are causing streaking rather than clean glass, come in for replacements.

As long as you're looking out at the world, here's something else to consider. All of your car windows accumulate oily particulate matter from the air. It builds up on the *inside* of all of your windows. Once every 90 days make it a point to apply glass cleaner and paper towels to all of your auto glass – on the inside. Pay special attention to your rear window to avoid backing into something you couldn't see.

STOP!

Are your brakes squealing as you pull up to traffic signals? It may be a sign that your brake pads, shoes or calipers have reached the end of their useful life. To save money, have them looked at now. Why? Because wearing your brakes beyond their useful life becomes expensive to correct. It also leaves your car unsafe.

Safe Driving

The cellular telephone is one of

the most useful inventions in modern history. It's also one of the most abused. We use it so often that we take it for granted and use it everywhere. The practice of dialing or texting while driving is quite common, but also extremely dangerous. Please do not, under any circumstances, make or receive calls while you're in moving traffic. You cannot be dodging the crazies on the road and be fully present for your cell phone at the same time.

According to a Harvard University study, an average of seven people a day die – from improper use of a cell phone while operating a motor vehicle. A number of large insurance claims were paid last year to the beneficiaries of folks who didn't believe that. Your family, friends, customers and clients need you. Stay alive. Don't dial and drive.

"It"

The Commoditization of America

Entirely too many businesses have become commoditized. A million times a day sales and service personnel hear the same phrase: "I can get it done cheaper somewhere else." The question is, what exactly is "it"?

Product and service quality and consistency can vary widely among providers. This is especially true in the auto service field. Someone told us about taking his Cadillac to a low cost oil change service. The techie forgot to tighten the plug in the crank case, the oil leaked out, and the engine self-destructed. In seeking a cheaper provider, how much did he actually save?

Some learn to understand this simple principle the hard way. A woman's car needed a minor repair. To save money, she took it to a local shop where the prices were low. In the process of completing the repair they bent the engine-mounted pulley that drives the air conditioner compressor. The air conditioner was no longer operable, and the shop owner refused to correct his error. Because the air conditioner was necessary in the hot summer months, she had to replace the car. In seeking cheaper repair services, she didn't save any money, did she?

Here at Gallagher's Auto Service we've been keeping cars and trucks running longer and better for more than forty years. We're not here to be

cheap. We're here to be the best we can be. Our charges allow us to maintain our reputation for quality work – saving you both time and money over the long term.

Personal Safety

Although a car fire can be really exciting, we don't recommend it as entertainment. Depending on the exact nature and location of a fire, there are several possible outcomes.

- The blaze can be small, brief, go out by itself and cause little damage.
- A more serious fire can do thousands of dollars of damage to your car, and require professional help to extinguish it.
- In a worst case scenario, the fire can reach your fuel tank and cause a huge explosion.

What to do when the smoke is rising from under your hood? Well, that's a tough call. Although experts would probably not recommend the do-it-yourself approach, a blast of dry chemical or CO₂ at the right time can save you a lot of aggravation and expense. A compact fire extinguisher can fit nicely in the trunk. To be extra safe, however, check with your local fire company to be sure.

Traffic Tickets

The expiration date of a state inspection sticker can be hard to read from the inside of your car or truck. To avoid a ticket for driving with an expired sticker, make it a point to check yours now and then.

Classic Auto History

The 1964 Mustang remains a modern classic in auto design. Heavily influenced by Lee Iacocca, it was created to serve a growing youth market and used Falcon drive trains as a means of creating a new car quickly. Bringing the Mustang to life also required halting production of another compact car, the Cardinal.

The distinctive body design by Dave Ash was approved because the clay model looked as though it was already moving.

On March 9, 1964, the first Mustang rolled off the assembly line – with a list price of \$2368.00!

Officially introduced on April 17 of that year, dealers were swamped with customers attracted by the combination of style and performance. Four million people visited Ford dealerships in the first week alone. 360,000 Mustangs were produced in the first year, and in the first two years, net profits of \$1.1 billion were realized in 1964 dollars.