Car Care

You don't have to know how to drive to learn about cars. With an adult partner, find out what makes a car run and how to keep it in good condition.





1. Check It Out

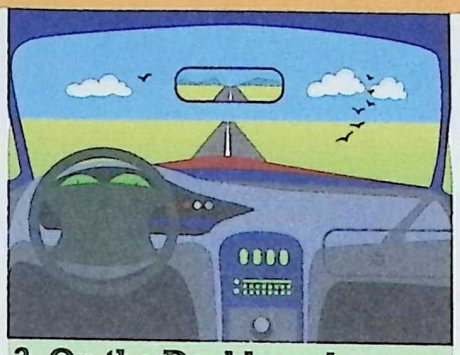
Find out about parts of a car that need to be checked regularly. Include in your safety check the tires, battery, lights, turn signals, emergency flashers, back-up lights, windshield wipers, spare tire, tire jack, flares, radiator, and seat belts. If you live in an area with hot and cold seasons, find out what items you need to check when the weather changes. With an adult partner, use your list to perform a safety check on a car. Show that you can:

- Check the oil level and add the right kind and amount of oil, if needed.
- Check the brake fluid reservoir and add the right amount of fluid, if needed.
- Check the power steering fluid, if the car has power steering.
- Check the automatic transmission fluid, if the car has automatic transmission.
- Check the windshield cleaning fluid level and add some, if needed.

Observe safety precautions at all times. Do not check a car or open the radiator cap while the engine is running. Always make sure the parking brake is on when you do work on a car.

2. Write It Down

Pick one of the safety checks from the list in activity 1, and write directions explaining how to do it. You may need to sketch out some diagrams in order to make your instructions clear. Give your instructions to an adult to see if she can follow them. Change your directions if something was unclear.



3. On the Dashboard

What are all those lights, buzzers, dials, and gauges on a dashboard for? Ask your adult partner to help you learn the name of each indicator (many show if something is wrong with the car).

4. Keep on Rolling

What are tires made of? Why and how are tires rotated? What causes tread wear? Learn how to check tire air pressure with the assistance of an adult. Discuss the safety issues involved in changing a flat tire for both the driver and passengers.

5. Owner's Manual

What are considered special features on a car? What three extra features would you like to have? Why? Find out what those extra features would cost. Look at the owner's manual for a car, visit a car dealership, or do some online comparisons.

6. Make It Shine

With the permission of the owner, learn the best way to wash a car or truck. Check the owner's manual to see what type of cleaner to use, then clean the inside and outside of the car. To conserve water, wash the car without letting a hose run continuously. Discuss with your adult partner how waxing a vehicle helps to keep its finish.

7. Public Safety

Find out what the safety inspection requirements are in your state. How often do cars have to pass this inspection? Work with an adult partner to find out whether the car you're working on would pass the state safety inspection.

8. Driving It

Many people have jobs that involve cars. Visit one of the following at work, or do an interview by phone or at a meeting or event:

- An auto mechanic
- A highway patrol officer
- Someone who drives trucks or other vehicles for a living
- Someone who designs cars or car-related equipment

What is a usual day like? What are some of the tools used? What kinds of safety issues are of concern? Why did she or he enter the profession? What type of training is needed? Would you like to have that job? Why or why not?

9. Be Prepared

Find out what you should have on hand for car emergencies. With your family members or guardians, create emergency kits for summer and winter. Put one of your kits in the vehicle so it can be used when needed.

10. As We Live and Breathe

Learn about one of the following:

- What devices have been installed in your car to reduce air pollution?
- What parts or products in a car can be recycled? Where would you take them?
- What new designs in cars are being developed to decrease or eliminate the use of gasoline?