

SPRING AUTO GUIDE



Cabin air filters: a guide to cleaning and replacing them

Does the air conditioning unit in your car get a lot of use in the summer? If so, it's important to attend to the air filters in your car's cabin. It's the best way to ensure that the air circulating in your car will be clean.

THE BASICS

If your vehicle was manufactured after the year 2000, it likely has cabin air filters. Depending on the make and model, it will have either one or two. Cabin air filters purify the air that enters into your car's cabin by trapping dust, mold, pollen and other fine particles.

Over time, cabin air filters can get pretty dirty. This is something you have to watch out for. When they're overly saturated, they're much less effective at trapping contaminants. Moreover, they can cause your car's cooling and heating system to work less efficiently.

WHEN TO REPLACE CABIN AIR FILTERS

Generally, manufacturers recommend that air filters be replaced about once a year. It's also worth it to clean them every few months.

If you have persistent bad odors in your car or the climate control is overly noisy, these are signs that the filters are due for a cleaning — or need to be replaced.

Cloth and carbon filters can withstand a few washes. Paper filters, however, are too fragile to clean and always need to be replaced when dirty.

HOW TO CLEAN CABIN AIR FILTERS

To clean your cloth or carbon air filters, first you need to get at them. Usually they're located on the passenger side under the glove box, and sometimes you need to remove the glove box from its fasteners to access them. Consult your owner's manual for detailed information on how to remove them.

Make sure to handle filters with care when removing them. If you tear them even slightly, they'll need to be replaced.

Clean each filter by running water through it at low pressure. Always apply the stream of water to the cleaner side and let it pass through to the dirtier side. Once you've got most of the dirt out, soak the filter in soapy water for 10 minutes. Afterwards, let it air dry on a towel. Once the filter is completely dry, it's time to put it back.

Note that you can only clean filters so many times. If they start to look at all ragged, it's best to replace them. You can put in a new air filter yourself or get the mechanic at your local garage to put one in for you.



How to change a flat tire in 10 easy steps

As countless drivers can confirm, most tire blowouts occur without warning. Should it happen to you, it's very handy to be able to change a flat yourself. And it's not hard to do! Just follow these 10 steps.

- 1. Pull over to a safe spot.** If you notice you have a flat, don't brake or turn abruptly. Instead, slowly reduce your speed and look for a wide shoulder with level ground. Once you're pulled over, put on your hazards and engage the emergency brake. If you have roadside flares or a reflective triangle, set them down behind your car.
- 2. Place wedges under the diagonally opposite wheel.** Put bricks, rocks, wooden blocks or wheel wedges both in front of and behind the wheel that's diagonally across from the flat. This is a safety measure meant to prevent the car from rolling.
- 3. Get your tools.** This includes the jack, the crank for the jack, the lug wrench and the spare tire.
- 4. Remove the hubcap or wheel cover.** If your hubcap is covering the lug nuts, remove it using the flat end of your lug wrench or according to the directions in your owner's manual.
- 5. Loosen the lug nuts.** With the lug wrench, unscrew the lug nuts slightly (just enough to break the resistance).
- 6. Position the jack under the vehicle.** Refer to the vehicle owner's manual for the best spot to place the jack. There are parts of the undercarriage designed to accommodate it.

- 7. Raise the vehicle with the jack.** Fix the crank onto the knob at the end of the jack and turn counterclockwise until the tire is about six inches off the ground.

- 8. Remove the flat tire.** Finish unscrewing the lug nuts and pull off the tire.

- 9. Put the spare tire on.** Mount the spare tire onto the lug bolts, then replace the lug nuts and tighten them by hand — but don't tighten them completely.

- 10. Lower the vehicle.** Turn the jack's crank clockwise until the vehicle is fully on the ground. Lastly, tighten the lug nuts completely and replace the hubcap.

That's all there is to it. Simply stow away your equipment and you can be on your way. Just make sure not to exceed highway speed limits with the spare. And be sure to get your flat tire fixed or replaced as soon as possible!

Be sure to keep your spare tire inflated to the PSI recommended by the manufacturer. You should verify its air pressure every time you check the other tires or about once a month.



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