Car Maintenance Checklist

A checklist for keeping a car maintained on a regular schedule.

Monthly checks

- [ ] Check tire pressure on all four tires and the spare against the door-jamb sticker.
  Check pressures when tires are cold, as driving heats the air and gives an artificially high reading.
- [ ] Inspect tire tread depth and look for uneven wear, cuts or bulges.
- [ ] Test all exterior lights — headlights, brake lights, turn signals and reverse.
- [ ] Check windshield washer fluid and top up if low.
- [ ] Look under the car for new fluid leaks or stains.
  A persistent leak should be diagnosed by a mechanic before it worsens.
- [ ] Listen for new noises from the brakes, suspension or engine.

Engine oil and fluids

- [ ] Check engine oil level and color with the dipstick on level ground.
  Wipe the dipstick clean first, reinsert fully, and ensure the level sits between the two marker holes.
- [ ] Change engine oil and the oil filter at the manufacturer's interval.
  Use the oil grade and capacity specified in your owner's manual.
- [ ] Check engine coolant level in the reservoir when the engine is cold.
  Never open a hot radiator cap; pressurized steam and scalding coolant can cause severe burn injuries.
- [ ] Inspect brake fluid level and that it is the correct DOT grade.
- [ ] Check power steering and transmission fluid where applicable.
- [ ] Top up windshield washer fluid suited to the season.

Tires and wheels

- [ ] Rotate tires at the interval in your manual to even out wear.
  Front tires wear faster on front-wheel-drive vehicles; regular rotation extends overall tread life.
- [ ] Have wheel alignment checked if the car pulls or tires wear unevenly.
- [ ] Have wheels balanced if you feel vibration at speed.
- [ ] Replace tires when tread reaches the wear bars or local legal limit.
- [ ] Confirm the spare is inflated and the jack and tools are present.
- [ ] Check valve caps are fitted and the TPMS warning light is off.

Brakes and suspension

- [ ] Have brake pads and rotors inspected for wear and scoring.
- [ ] Check for grinding, squealing or a soft brake pedal.
  Any change in braking feel warrants prompt inspection by a mechanic.
- [ ] Verify the parking brake holds the car on a slope.
- [ ] Inspect shocks and struts for leaks or excessive bounce.
- [ ] Check for clunks or play in the steering and suspension.
- [ ] Confirm the ABS and brake warning lights are off.

Filters, belts and battery

- [ ] Replace the engine air filter at the manufacturer's interval.
- [ ] Replace the cabin air filter to keep airflow and demisting strong.
- [ ] Inspect drive belts for cracking, glazing or fraying.
- [ ] Check hoses for swelling, cracks or soft spots.
- [ ] Clean battery terminals and check for corrosion and secure mounting.
  White or bluish powder around terminals restricts current; clean it off with a wire brush and water.
- [ ] Test battery health, especially before winter and after three years.

Seasonal and mileage milestones

- [ ] Replace wiper blades that streak or chatter, typically twice a year.
- [ ] Switch to appropriate tires and fluids ahead of winter or summer.
- [ ] Replace spark plugs at the manufacturer's specified mileage.
- [ ] Change the timing belt or chain by the interval — failure can wreck the engine.
  This is a major service; follow the manual's mileage and use a qualified mechanic.
- [ ] Flush and replace coolant on the recommended schedule.
- [ ] Keep all service records and receipts to protect warranty and resale value.