Summer Car Checklist

A checklist for preparing a car for summer heat.

Cooling system

- [ ] Check coolant level when cold and top up with the correct mix.
  Low or weak coolant is a leading cause of summer overheating.
- [ ] Flush and replace coolant if it is old or discolored.
- [ ] Inspect the radiator and condenser for blockages and debris.
- [ ] Confirm the cooling fan and fan clutch operate correctly.
- [ ] Check hoses for soft spots, swelling or leaks.
- [ ] Verify the radiator cap seals and holds pressure.

Air conditioning and comfort

- [ ] Test the AC for cold airflow at idle and while driving.
- [ ] Have the refrigerant recharged if cooling is weak.
  Persistent weak cooling can mean a leak; have it diagnosed by a technician.
- [ ] Replace the cabin air filter for strong, clean airflow.
- [ ] Check that all vents and fan speeds work.
- [ ] Confirm windows and the sunroof open and close fully.
- [ ] Consider a sunshade to limit cabin heat when parked.

Tires and wheels

- [ ] Check tire pressure cold, since heat raises it during driving.
- [ ] Inspect tread depth and look for cracks, bulges or aging.
- [ ] Replace tires showing dry rot or sidewall cracking.
  Hot pavement raises blowout risk on worn or aged tires.
- [ ] Rotate tires if due to even out wear.
- [ ] Confirm the spare is inflated and tools are present.
- [ ] Verify the TPMS light is off after checking pressures.

Battery and electrical

- [ ] Test the battery, since heat shortens its life faster than cold.
- [ ] Clean terminals and confirm they are tight and corrosion-free.
- [ ] Check the alternator is charging correctly.
- [ ] Confirm the battery is secure with no swelling or leaks.
- [ ] Replace a weak or aged battery before a long summer trip.
- [ ] Verify all lights and electrical accessories work.

Fluids and engine

- [ ] Check engine oil level and change it if a service is due.
- [ ] Verify brake, power steering and transmission fluids.

- [ ] Top up windshield washer fluid for summer bugs and dust.
- [ ] Inspect belts for cracking and glazing from heat.
- [ ] Look under the car for any fresh fluid leaks.
- [ ] Confirm no warning lights remain lit after start-up.

Visibility and hot-weather readiness

- [ ] Replace worn wiper blades dried out by sun and heat.
- [ ] Clean the windshield and apply a water repellent for sudden storms.
- [ ] Confirm all lights work for long summer drives.
- [ ] Pack water for occupants and a small emergency kit.
- [ ] Never leave children or pets in a parked car in heat.
- [ ] Confirm roadside assistance and insurance are current.