Vehicle Safety Checklist

A checklist for keeping a vehicle safe to drive.

Tires and wheels

- [ ] Check tire pressure on all tires and the spare.
- [ ] Measure tread depth and confirm it exceeds the legal minimum.
  Worn tires lose grip and dramatically lengthen wet braking distances.
- [ ] Inspect for cuts, bulges, cracks or embedded objects.
- [ ] Confirm lug nuts are present and tight.
- [ ] Check for uneven wear that signals alignment or suspension issues.
- [ ] Verify the spare and tire-change tools are present and usable.

Brakes and steering

- [ ] Confirm the brake pedal is firm and braking is straight.
- [ ] Listen for grinding or squealing that signals worn pads.
  Grinding brakes need immediate inspection by a mechanic.
- [ ] Verify the parking brake holds on an incline.
- [ ] Check the steering for excessive play or pulling.
- [ ] Confirm ABS and brake warning lights are off.
- [ ] Check power steering fluid and listen for suspension clunks.

Lights and visibility

- [ ] Test headlights, high beams and that they aim correctly.
- [ ] Check brake lights, turn signals and hazard lights.
- [ ] Verify reverse, fog and license plate lights.
- [ ] Confirm wipers clear the glass and washers spray.
- [ ] Clean the windshield, mirrors and lights.
- [ ] Test the defroster and demister for clear visibility.

Restraints and occupant safety

- [ ] Confirm all seatbelts latch, retract and are undamaged.
- [ ] Check child seats are correctly installed and within their limits.
  Follow the seat and vehicle manuals for correct child-seat fitting.
- [ ] Verify airbag warning lights clear at start-up.
- [ ] Confirm head restraints are present and adjusted.
- [ ] Check that doors and child locks operate correctly.
- [ ] Ensure no loose objects can become projectiles in a crash.

Recalls and systems

- [ ] Search for open recalls using your VIN and have them fixed.
  Recall repairs are typically free at a manufacturer's dealer.

- [ ] Address any dashboard warning lights promptly.
- [ ] Verify driver-assistance systems function as intended.
- [ ] Check that the horn sounds clearly.
- [ ] Confirm the engine and transmission show no warning faults.
- [ ] Keep the maintenance and recall history up to date.

Emergency equipment

- [ ] Carry a warning triangle and reflective vest.
- [ ] Pack a first-aid kit and check its contents.
- [ ] Keep a flashlight with working batteries.
- [ ] Carry jumper cables or a portable jump starter.
- [ ] Stock water and seasonal emergency supplies.
- [ ] Confirm a fire extinguisher where required and keep it accessible.