Winter Car Checklist

A checklist for preparing a car for winter weather.

Battery and electrical

- [ ] Test the battery's charge and health before the cold arrives.
  Cold cuts battery capacity; a marginal battery often fails in winter.
- [ ] Clean corrosion from terminals and confirm they are tight.
- [ ] Check the alternator is charging and belts are sound.
- [ ] Confirm the battery is securely mounted with no case damage.
- [ ] Carry jumper cables or a portable jump starter.
- [ ] Replace a battery older than four to five years before winter.

Tires and traction

- [ ] Fit winter tires as a set of four if your climate warrants them.
- [ ] Check tread depth; winter grip drops sharply on worn tires.
- [ ] Set tire pressures, since cold air lowers them noticeably.
  Check pressures on a cold morning and top up to the door-jamb spec.
- [ ] Carry chains or traction aids where required by law or conditions.
- [ ] Confirm the spare is inflated and accessible.
- [ ] Verify the TPMS light is off after adjusting pressures.

Fluids and cooling system

- [ ] Check coolant and confirm the antifreeze mix suits expected lows.
  Test the freeze protection rating; weak coolant can freeze and crack the engine.
- [ ] Switch to winter-grade windshield washer fluid that resists freezing.
- [ ] Check engine oil; consider a winter-appropriate grade per the manual.
- [ ] Verify brake and power steering fluid levels.
- [ ] Inspect hoses and belts that stiffen and crack in the cold.
- [ ] Top up and test the heater and defroster operation.

Visibility and exterior

- [ ] Replace worn wipers or fit winter blades that shed ice.
- [ ] Test all lights — they matter more in short winter days.
- [ ] Keep an ice scraper and snow brush in the car.
- [ ] Check door and window seals to prevent freezing shut.
- [ ] Apply a lock de-icer or treat seals against freezing.
- [ ] Keep headlights and indicators clear of snow and salt grime.

Winter emergency kit

- [ ] Pack a warm blanket, gloves, hat and spare warm clothing.
- [ ] Carry a small shovel and sand, salt or traction mats.

- [ ] Stock a flashlight, warning triangle and reflective vest.
- [ ] Bring water, non-perishable snacks and any medications.
- [ ] Pack a first-aid kit and hand warmers.
- [ ] Keep a phone charger and power bank fully charged.

Cold-weather driving readiness

- [ ] Keep the fuel tank at least half full to reduce condensation and ensure heat.
- [ ] Clear all snow and ice from the roof, windows and lights before driving.
- [ ] Confirm roadside assistance and insurance are current.
- [ ] Practice gentle braking and longer following distances on ice.
- [ ] Check weather and road conditions before each trip.
- [ ] Tell someone your route and expected arrival in severe weather.