

Automotive English: Maintenance

Yesterday we talked about breakdowns. I think that none of us wants our car to break down. What can you do to make sure your car doesn't break down? Well, there are a few things: I think the *kind* of car you have is important (don't drive an American car!), but so is the way you treat the car. And the maintenance you do on the car is important, too.

If the word maintenance is new for you, then what we learn here today will be just for you.

Before You Start the Recording

If you have a car, you do a lot of different things to make sure the car will always take you where you want to go. Maybe you check the air in the tires, or you make sure there is enough oil in the car. Today, we'll talk about all these things, and we'll use the word 'maintenance' to do it.

Start the recording now.

After You've Listened to the Recording

What kind of maintenance do you do on your car yourself? Can you change your own oil? Do you change the tires yourself? Do you know how to check your breaks yourself?

What other things in your life—besides your car—need maintenance?

Vocabulary

Maintain / Maintenance: Any complicated system can break down. In our examples, it's a car.

But there are things you can do *while your car still works fine* to (hopefully) prevent a breakdown. These things are 'maintenance.' *Maintenance* simply means 'all the work to keep something going.' And 'maintain,' you might have guessed, is the verb for doing this work. You can maintain a relationship. Lots of people maintain a computer network. And, of course, your car needs periodic maintenance.

Oil / Check the oil: 'Oil' is the fluid in your engine that keeps the parts from wearing down. (It's also the word for the stuff we pump out of the ground to make into gasoline.) Because your car needs oil to run, it's important to *check the oil* to make sure there is enough in the engine.

Change the tires: Where I come from in the U.S., it can really *snow* in the winter. The tires we use on our cars in the summer aren't good for driving in the winter, and so most car owners have eight tires for their car: four are for the summer, four are for the winter. But, that means you have to *change your tires* twice a year. In the spring you have to take the winter tires off and put the summer tires on. . . and in the fall you have to change your tires again!

Inspection: A car needs a lot of things to work in order for it to be safe: it should have working brakes, it should have a horn that works, and the tires should be okay. In many places, it's mandatory to take your car to a garage once a year, or every two years, so a mechanic can look at all of these things. This is the 'inspection' for your car. In Pennsylvania, where I learned to drive, after an *inspection*, the mechanic would give us an 'inspection sticker' to put on the car so that the police could see the car was inspected.