



Will's Car Wisdom

A quart of oil IS WORTH a pound of bearings

AUTOMOTIVE MAINTENANCE TIPS AND RAMBLINGS



BY MR. WUILWIDE



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WILL'S CAR WISDOM

Dedicated to my Wife Kelly, My Son Billy, and My daughter Zoey.

Dedicated to my friends and family who believe in, and support my crazy ideas and push me to be a better person everyday.

Dedicated to all my brothers wither soever disperesed around the globe.

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Kind of weird, I know

Preventative maintenance (PM) is not sexy, which is why most people neglect to do it.

Doing an oil change, tire rotation, or valve adjustment are things you need to do when owning a car or motorcycle.

These PM jobs make a good vehicle better, more dependable, and keep you from breaking down.

The problem is you can't show off a tune-up like you can a shiny new set of wheels or stereo.

Americans seem to dislike doing preventative maintenance on their cars, PM just isn't cool. You can't share it on "Tha 'Gram" for likes. It makes people dread going to the shop or dealership, the fear being that there will be more work needed than originally anticipated.

The unprepared customer goes in for an oil change and tire rotation, and is surprised that their tires need to be replaced, and the brakes squeak because they are worn down. When the estimate comes across the service advisor's desk, you can almost hear the internal scream from sticker shock.

"But Mr. Customer" the advisor says, "We recommended tires on your last service visit, and mentioned the brakes may need attention soon!"

To most customers, the shop is merely trying to get more money from their pockets. To the service techs and the shop owner, they were just trying to keep the customer safe and on the road.

If we would simply take the time to read the owner's manual (RTFM), there would be no surprises. Cars, motorcycles, boats, and RV's all have an owner's manual with a section labeled "scheduled maintenance". This section of the manual tells you exactly what to expect when you service your vehicle, it tells you the mileage intervals for oil changes, it tells you how long you should wait before replacing the coolant, it even tells you when the big ticket items like timing belts need replacing.

We choose to ignore this section of the owner's manual, because we would then need to plan ahead for these expenses. This is something most people avoid for whatever reason, a simple call to the dealer at 10,000 miles to get an estimate for a 30,000-mile service gives ample opportunity to plan ahead and save for these seemingly expensive services. The alternative is burying your head in the sand to avoid finding out the costs for the service and instead complaining when something breaks from negligence.

A timing belt replacement can cost \$1,200-\$2,500 dollars to perform, something that sounds expensive if you don't take into consideration how much a replacement engine will be. Instead of preparing for the 100,000 mile belt replacement, we ignore it and proclaim "*My car is reliable and runs great now, WHY do I need a timing belt?*" hoping this will keep the mechanical gremlins away.

Well, that engine has an interference valve train that will bend and destroy valves and pistons when the belt gives out. Imagine pistons running into valves and chunks of metal flying around the combustion chamber, something we like to call "catastrophic damage". Now you're on the hook for a \$5,000 engine replacement.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, or in this case, a quart of oil is worth a pound of bearings.

So, open your owner's manual, get familiar with the maintenance schedule, and call ahead to start saving up for your PM to avoid costly repairs. Get the ounce of prevention done, and you won't end up needing a pound of cure, or an engine.

With all that said, buckle up and shift into gear; we're rolling out!

Here are Will's top 10 Automotive maintenance tips:



1.

The Visual Inspection

The power of your peepers

One of the most powerful tools you have when maintaining your car is already built into your noggin; your eyeballs. Looking around your car can help you spot issues before they become serious repairs. Notice a leaking radiator hose? Get on the phone with the shop or parts store to order a new one. See a new oil leak in your driveway, get under there and LOOK where it may be coming from. Is one tire wearing more than the others? Go to the alignment shop and ask why?

As simple as this advice seems, it's something most owners take for granted. As a matter of fact, one of the FIRST things technicians are trained to do when diagnosing an issue (after verifying the issue even exists) is to perform a visual inspection. Loose or unplugged connectors, frayed wires, missing reservoir caps, and low tire pressure are all things that can be determined with only the power of your peepers.

2.

Clean your ride

Wax on, Wax off

A clean car is a sign of a loving and caring owner. A clean interior is also good for your mind and it helps you keep a positive attitude about your car. Keeping the paint waxed isn't only about looking good, in areas where snow and road salt are a thing, it helps prevent rust from eating away at your baby. Keeping the interior tidy also helps minimize odors and dust.

A clean paint job without scratches and swirl marks also helps your future resale value. Get in the habit of washing your car weekly or bi-weekly. I enjoy washing my car on Saturday mornings, before all the kids are up I make it a point to grab a cup of coffee and head to the local carwash to run my truck through. If you have the resources to do so, a hand wash is ideal, otherwise just run through the automated wash (be careful with antennas and mirrors!).

Emptying your car's interior should be on your schedule 2-3 times per week, or as often as you fill the tank. Most gas stations have waste bins next to the pumps. While you are filling the tank, take time to open all the doors and grab all the Reeses wrappers, Rockstar cans, and old receipts. Getting rid of all this trash will help your car from getting sticky residue everywhere, it also helps keep bad odors and crumbs from getting everywhere.

Vacuuming the carpets also helps prevent holes from the abrasive dirt and sand on your shoes.

Cleanliness is next to Godliness.

3.

Check your tires

More than just a kick

Your tires are one of the most important parts of your car. They support the entire weight of the vehicle and act as part of the suspension to help absorb vibrations and bumps in the road. They ensure you have traction to accelerate, turn, and stop. They need to be in good condition, have plenty of tread to displace water, and hold air without leaks.

Get in the habit of checking your tires at least 1-2 times per week, when they are cold in the morning before you leave for work. Buy a tire pressure gauge and learn what the manufacturer's specification is for your car or truck. Some cars even have this information in the door jamb. For others, you may have to look in your owner's manual (RTFM) or use the power of the internet to search online.

If your car is equipped with large alloy wheels and disc brakes, this is also a great opportunity to get your eyes on the brakes. Are they looking worn out? Notice any grooves or scoring on the discs? have them checked out, it may be time to service them.

Buy and learn to use a tire tread depth gauge, or use the old penny trick with Honest Abe's head (If you're in the US). Most manufacturers and government agencies recommend replacing tires when the tread reaches the wear bars or at $3/32$ nds of an inch (a little over 2mm for my metric friends).

Dont just kick tires, check 'em.

4.

Check your fluids

Don't be a dipstick

You have a few minutes when filling your tank, take this time to also check your fluids. Engine oil, coolant, power steering, brake fluid, transmission and washer fluid. All of these are important to keep an eye on (visual inspection anyone?) and keeping them at the correct level will prevent breakdowns and costly repairs.

It costs nothing to learn how to check these fluids, and benefits you as the owner. Getting to know your machine will make your car more reliable and dependable simply because you are breaking the cycle of ignorance with knowledge about what to check and how to top it off.

Your owner's manual (RTFM) will tell you how to check these fluids, where to add more fluid, and even what type of fluids to buy.

Take time to make time.

5.

Check your belts

Not your pantalones

No not the one holding up your pants, the belts that drive your engine accessories. If your vehicle is equipped with a serpentine belt, you only need to check the one. For all other cars, you may have multiple belts to inspect.

Use your eyeballs (dang that visual inspection again eh?) to look for cracks, fraying, and fretting. These are all signs that it's time to change your drive belts yesterday. Belts are cheap, and in some cars it is a 5 minute job to replace the serpentine belt with basic hand tools.

Keeping the belts in good shape helps prevent breakdowns and, in some cases, expensive engine repairs. If you are unable to replace the belts yourself, call around and get some quotes for the replacements.

Ok, now check your pants.

6.

Check your hoses

Up your nose with a rubber hose

Coolant hoses are made of rubber, and just like any other rubber part on your car, they wear with age. Coolant hoses expand and get soft or mushy. Catching a hose that's ready to fail before it happens is golden. The last thing you want to do is get stuck on the side of the road waiting for a tow truck driver.

Cooling system maintenance is a bit more tricky and requires special tools in some cases. If you're up for it, you can replace your coolant hoses and refill the system with new coolant to keep your car up to snuff.

Stay cool.

7.

Check your lights

See and be seen

Just like your tires, lights are a safety item as being seen by other drivers can help prevent collisions or accidents with objects on the road.

Make it a habit to check your lights monthly or quarterly to ensure you have all the boxes checked off. Headlights, side markers, turn signals, tail lights, brake lights, backup lights, and fog lamps if so equipped.

Seeing and being seen while driving, should be taken just as seriously as the other maintenance items on this list and most lights only require basic hand tools to service and replace. Keeping a few spares in the glove box doesn't hurt either.

Let there be light!

8.

RTFM

Knowledge is power

Read.The.Freaking.Manual. Almost everything you need to know about your car is in the owner's manual. How to check fluids, what pressure to put in your tires, and how to set the blinking clock on your dash that reads "12:00". You'll even learn where the fuses are and what they do!

The owner's manual also includes the maintenance schedule for your ride. You'll know exactly what to expect every 5,000-10,000 miles. No surprise expenses or services when you read the manual. Make it a habit to review your manual and learn as much about your car as you can.

Knowing is half the battle!

9.

Repair manual and tools

Wrenching is fun

If you are brave and somewhat handy with tools, this can be a lifesaver.

A basic set of tools should include all the usual suspects; Screwdrivers, pliers, combination wrenches, a socket set with ratchet, electrical test meter, and a generic scan tool.

These tools can save you hundreds, and potentially thousands of dollars when combined with a repair manual and the power of the internet. You should read the entire procedure BEFORE starting any work, and if you are still unsure about something, watch somebody else do the work on a Youtube video.

Doing your own oil change, replacing the air filter, a light bulb, or even a tune up can be a satisfying reward for the average car owner and a learning experience in what it actually takes to service a car.

10.

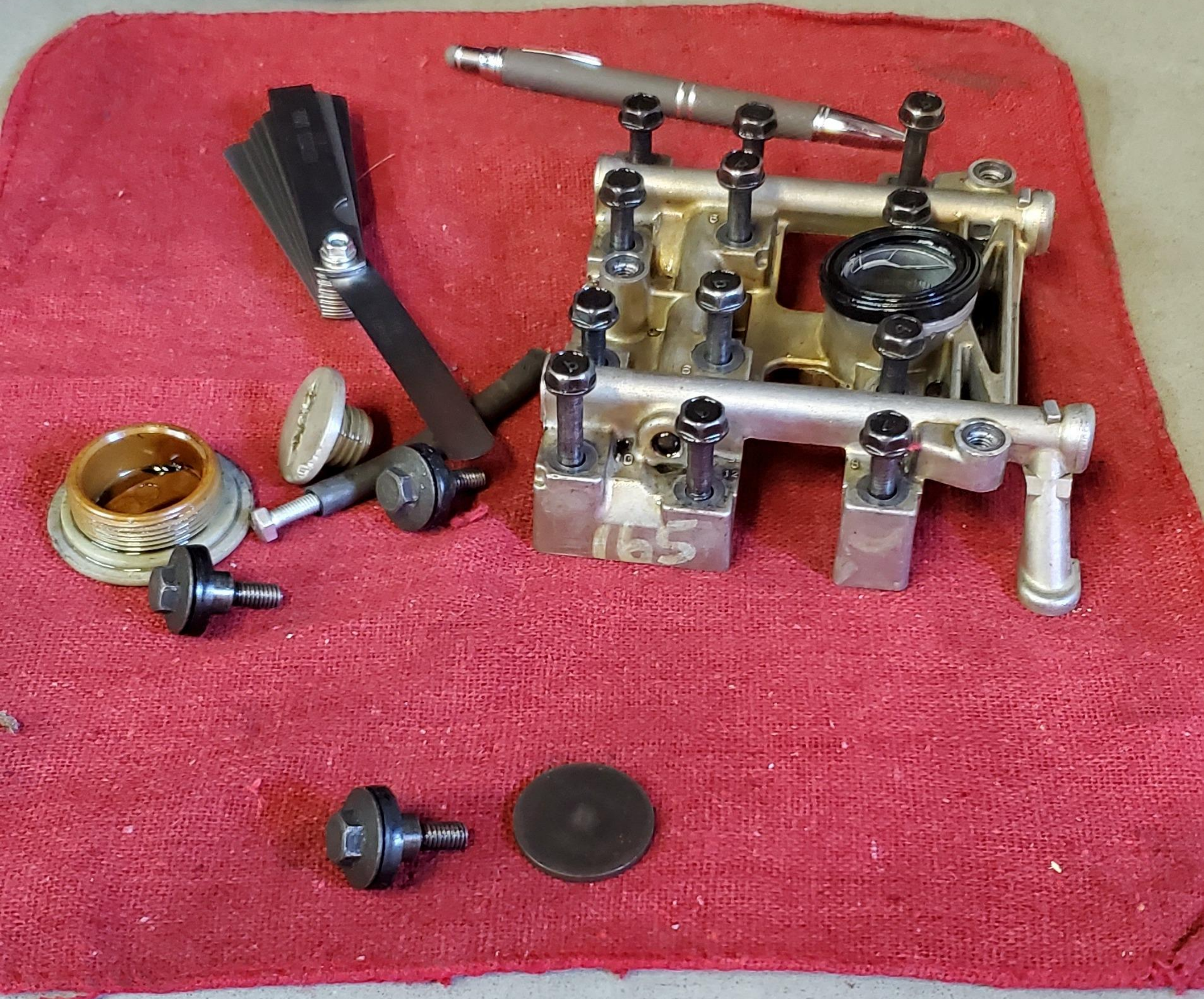
Document everything

The proof is in the pudding

Start a service and maintenance log, keeping up on all the above items are of little value if you don't keep track of when things were last done. Even if it's just keeping all the receipts in one place, knowing when you last replaced wiper blades, changed the oil, or rotated the tires will help prevent duplicating efforts and spending money unnecessarily.

Keeping accurate records also helps add value to your car when the time comes to sell it. Potential buyers look for maintenance records and a track record or keeping the car safe and reliable to ensure they are making a wise investment.

Paperwork is key



The term “lemon” gets thrown around a lot when people discuss older or used cars. A Lemon is a car that has had the same repair performed several times in a good faith effort to correct the issue. For whatever reason, usually poor manufacturing, the issue persists and a manufacturer is forced to buy the car back from the consumer.

A neglected car is not a lemon, your car that needs maintenance is not a lemon, squeaky brakes are not cause for calling your car a lemon. Keep up with your maintenance and learn how to care for your car. It will make you a happier car owner and prevent you from making rash decisions.

I hope that this Ebook has brought something of value to your automotive journey. I would like to end with a piece of automotive wisdom; there are no "good" or "bad" cars, there are only owner's that care for, or neglect their cars.



MR.

WUILWIDE

MRWUILWIDE415@GMAIL.COM

MRWUILWIDE415.WEEBLY.COM

IG: @MRWUILWIDE415

PODCAST: MR WUILWIDE