



THE WORLD-  
**Spectator**

**2026 SPRING**

**CAR CARE**





# 2026 SPRING CAR CARE

## All you need to know about caring for the leather in your car

Formerly a luxury for only the richest car owners, leather is becoming much more common in car interiors today. The quality of leather seat coverings and other leather trims differ greatly from one model to another, but their upkeep is fairly standardized. Here are a few useful tips.

Leather is the most delicate surface inside a car. Two crucial and inseparable steps are required to keep it well maintained and ensure its durability: cleaning and polishing. Cleaning leather requires using a special product specifically designed for the task. If the surfaces are very dirty you could always clean them first with mild soap and water. Incidentally, water does not damage car-quality leather.

If the leather is light coloured, clean it more frequently, perhaps



every month or two, depending on how quickly it tends to get dirty. Two or three cleanings every year should be sufficient for darker leathers. Other than that, your car's leather surfaces would benefit from being wiped down as often as possible with a damp cloth in order to get rid of any residues that could wear it out prematurely. These residues fall into two categories: dirt, including dust, small pebbles, and sand, which can eventually penetrate and damage the leather; and sweat, whose oils can dry and crack leather over time.

Once the leather has been thoroughly cleaned, apply a protective cream to return the leather to its original softness and suppleness. Keep in mind that the dryer the climate in which you live, the more often the cleaning and polishing of leather is recommended.



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# 2026 SPRING CAR CARE

## Choosing the right summer tires

Choosing the right summer tires is just as important as choosing the right winter tires. Because just as winter tires are designed for special conditions, such as driving in heavy snow or on ice, summer tires can be chosen for specific needs as well, including for performance enhancement or wet climates.

In Canada, keep in mind that although we can buy summer or all-season tires, the latter is not considered part of the winter tire family. Tire manufacturers generally install all-season tires on their cars and light trucks, but they are most definitely not made for the kind of winters most provinces experience. True summer tires are mostly destined for performance cars.

When choosing a new all-season or summer tire, don't just look for the cheapest price possible. Try to get the best value for your bud-



get's dollar. Remember that your life and your passengers' lives depend upon those four points of contact with the road — a patch of tire that is no larger than the palm of your hand. That is especially so

if you like to drive at 120 km/h.

A performance car that was created to run on performance tires should always be shod with real performance tires, no matter how expensive they are. So, remember this piece of information when shopping for a new car: although they might look like regular sedans, some cars were designed and built with performance in mind, and they absolutely require performance tires. Do not choose less expensive ones that will not meet the car's engineering in certain situations.

Lastly, when looking for a new all-season or performance tire, try to find one that can disperse water very efficiently. That might just be the best advice an expert could give to a car owner living in any area where it can rain at any moment, and very often.

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## Prepping your car for summer



No matter where you live in Canada, winter can be rough on your car, even if it was stored in a nice, dry place. Indeed, any vehicle that has been kept unused or, worse, one that has been run during the harshest season of the year needs to be carefully detailed before we hit the warm days of summer.

Of course, each and every mechanical maintenance chore has to be done every spring, from the oil change to the tire inspection, and don't forget the visual inspection for any loose or missing parts or burned lights. Cars and light trucks that were subjected to winter usage require even more attention. They, too, need to see their drive

train maintained, but more time must be spent cleaning and detailing the body. Even unseen parts of the car might be covered with salt, sand, and road dirt that have accumulated in the undercarriage and the trims.

This kind of detailing requires a complete wash of the vehicle, starting with a going-over or two in a no-contact car wash (a car wash using only water spray, without brushes). This step will remove the bulk of the grime. Nevertheless, such an operation always leaves behind a film of dirt or some light deposits behind the trim. That is where a manual wash comes in handy. Only the human eye can detect hidden dirt and give the vehicle the tender loving care it needs to stay nice and shiny for years. And only the human hand can give a car the super detailing touch it deserves for longer years of reliable use. Remember that next Saturday morning — if Mother Nature cooperates!

### Is it time to top up your car's fluids?

The mechanical components of your vehicle need fluids and lubricants in order to work well. The rigours of winter driving are hard on these liquids, so replacing them is definitely not a luxury when spring rolls around.

The first thing to think about is changing the engine oil. When you had your oil changed last fall, it's possible that your garage mechanic used oil designed for cold temperatures. This type of oil is not suitable for hot weather and should be replaced by a lubricant whose properties protect your engine when temperatures soar to record heights.

An oil change is also a good opportunity to check other fluids, such as those in the brake system and transmission. These fluids usually last longer, but you don't want levels to get too low. Checking the coolant is also a good idea, as it prevents your engine from overheating in hot weather; that's something you really don't want to happen.

If you're taking your car in to the garage for all these checks, ask your mechanic if your vehicle needs a lube job. The proper functioning of many of your vehicle's parts depends on this. Often enough people neglect to check and the consequences can sometimes be dramatic for your wallet as well as for the longevity of your car.



Lastly, although not quite so important, don't forget to fill your windshield washer reservoir, which you probably emptied during that last spring storm. By the way, never replace this fluid with water in order to save a few dollars; you could have a real problem if you forget about it when temperatures start dropping again. And plain water just won't be able to deal with all those bugs on your windshield this summer.

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## Tips for a clean, fresh-smelling car



This past winter probably wreaked havoc on your car's interior, what with all the road salt, sand, mud and grit that get tramped through it. Every nook and cranny of your carpets, console, mouldings and upholstery take a beating, and they need to be thoroughly cleaned when spring comes.

The first thing to remember is that it's vital to use the appropriate cleaning products so you don't damage any materials or change their appearance and colour. Specialized products with a beeswax or lanolin base are great for leather upholstery. Avoid using silicone products, as they can damage leather seats as well as the clothes you're wearing when you sit on them.

Cleaning products specifically designed to shine up plastics and wood are also available in stores. However, a more economical option is to use a damp cloth along with a mild soap and hot water. For your car windows, a mixture of water and vinegar is effective, or you could always opt for a streak-free glass cleaner.

### Cigarette smoke

There are lots of homemade remedies for cars that reek of cigarette smoke. The first step is to wash your ashtray, of course. Then fill two plastic dishes with distilled white vinegar and place them carefully side by side, uncovered, in the back of the vehicle. After a few hours, the vinegar should have absorbed the smell. If the odour persists, sprinkle the seats and carpeting with baking soda, leave for a few hours, and then vacuum thoroughly.

### Make war on stains

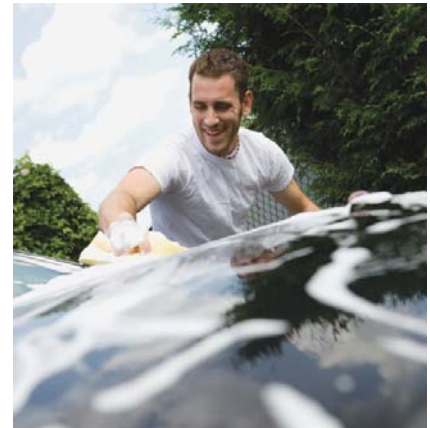
The inside of your vehicle is subjected to some pretty rough treatment over the winter. There's no respite from snow, mud, sand and road salt; seats collect surprising amounts of debris from salt-dirty coats and bags, and salt-caked car rugs look as if they're beyond redemption.

Fortunately, it's possible to remedy this situation once the warm weather arrives. First of all, it's essential to have the right cleaning products. Car specialty stores and big box stores have entire aisles filled with products dedicated to automotive care. Just be sure to use the appropriate products for optimal results.

Be sure to use gentler products when cleaning leather and leatherette. This type of product often includes a protective coating that restores suppleness to leather. The use of foams designed to penetrate deep into the upholstery is a must for fabric seats. Applying a sealant will help protect these surfaces after they've been cleaned.

Cleaning the carpets is simpler but it requires as much effort. The first step is to vacuum them to remove as much embedded debris as possible. Next comes the cleaning up operation, which can be done with the help of a specialized product or, in the case of bad stains, a steam cleaner. The use of a water and vinegar solution can work miracles when it comes to road salt stains. If the stains don't disappear straight away, simply repeat the process.

The important thing to remember is that you should always use the right product for the type of surface you want to clean. The interior of your car will be all the better for it.



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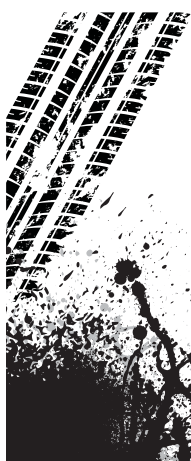
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