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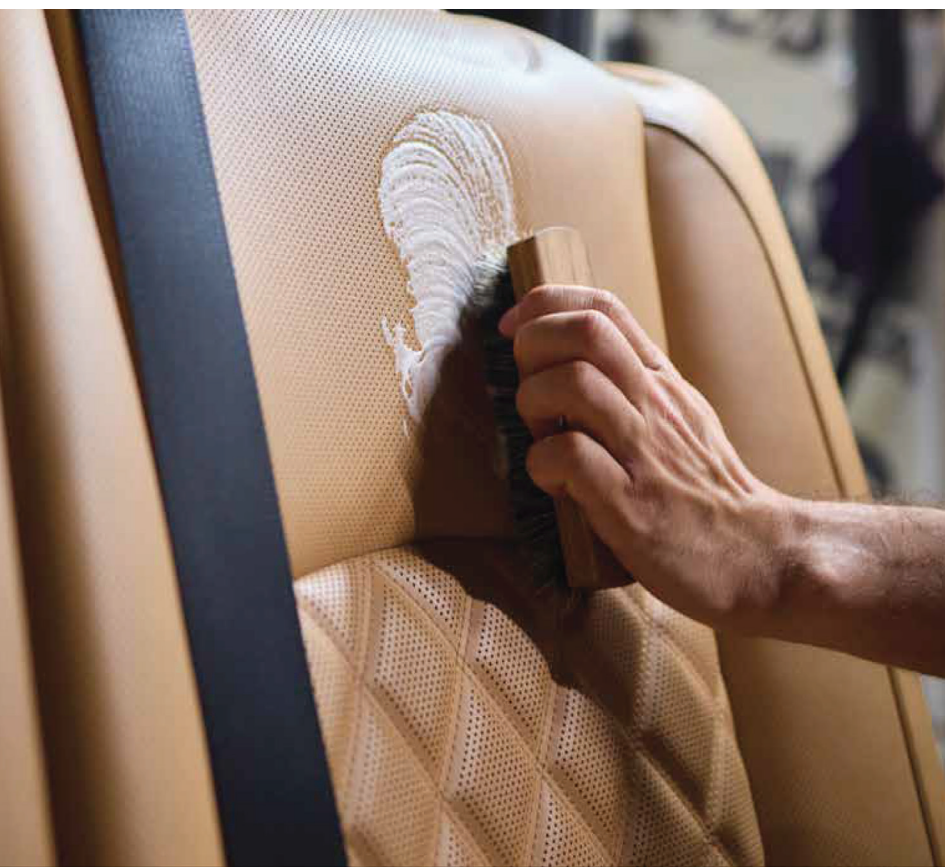


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FALL CAR CARE | INTERIOR

Leather Seat Care

Leather seats give any vehicle a sense of style. They're also far easier to maintain than most fabric options. Leather, however, requires its own special attention.

For best results, use special cloths, cleaning solutions and conditioners. Here's how to keep your leather car surfaces in tip-top shape:

water to one part soap. When cleaning your leather seats, use a microfiber cloth and take care not to oversaturate the surfaces with too much liquid.

DRYING YOUR LEATHER

Use a second clean microfiber cloth to thoroughly dry all surfaces, and remove as much moisture as possible. Never leave your seats and any other leather areas wet for a long time, since this can lead to mold growth and cracking or warping. Experts recommend a thorough cleaning at least once a month – or more frequently if you are often traveling with children and furry friends.

GETTING STARTED

Begin by sweeping away any loose dirt, trash or debris from your leather seats. A heavy-duty shop vacuum is great for pulling dirt from pesky corners and crevices – especially if you use the vacuum nozzle accessory. Place it right in the seams and between the seating and back surfaces for the most thorough cleaning.

CLEANER OPTIONS

Be careful when selecting a cleaning solution. Avoid household products that contain ammonia or bleach, since they can permanently damage the leather in your vehicle. Instead, opt for commercial cleaners from retail or auto parts stores that specifically mention use on leather. Some do-it-yourself types create their own solution by mixing liquid dish soap or Castile olive oil-based soap with water. The ratio is five parts

LEATHER CONDITIONING

For additional protection, evenly apply a high-quality conditioner to all leather surfaces. This will help maintain moisture levels within the leather and may provide UV protection to prevent fading. After the conditioner has been absorbed, wipe off any excess product with a clean microfiber cloth.

Manufacturers usually recommend that leather be allowed to “rest” for four to six hours after application before driving again. Refer to instructions on the product label for the best results. Condition leather surfaces in your car or truck every three to six months.

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FALL CAR CARE | FLUIDS

Checking Your Levels

This season can be tough on car engines.

That's why it's so important to have essential fluids regularly checked.

Whether you take care of vehicle maintenance yourself or have it done at a shop or dealership, six key fluids will need to be checked, replaced or topped off. They include engine oil and coolant, of course, but also brake fluid, power steering fluid, transmission fluid and windshield washer fluid. Here's what to look for:

ENGINE OIL

Allow the engine to cool before checking the oil. Locate the dipstick, remove it and wipe it clean with a cloth before reinserting it. Pull it out again to see whether the oil level reaches the indicators marked on the stick. Take note of the color, which should be yellow or amber. Oil should feel slick and not gritty.

BRAKE FLUID

Contemporary vehicles operate with hydraulic brakes that need fluid to operate. If brake fluid becomes contaminated with water, the brake lines may become rusted and leak. Lower brake fluid level can result in spongy pedals and inconsistent performance. To check the brake fluid, refer to your owner's manual for the reservoir's

location and check its level and color. Brake fluid is available in various translucent colors; it should not be dark or cloudy.

POWER STEERING FLUID

Modern steering systems operate hydraulically. Find a dipstick or reservoir under the hood near the engine and look for markings or lines. If the fluid level is below the

recommended range, add the specified type as indicated in your owner's manual. If you're regularly required to add more fluid, have a local pro look for a possible leak.

TRANSMISSION FLUID

Transmission fluid lubricates and cools the system's gears, valves and clutches. Many modern transmissions

use a version that typically doesn't require replacement. Just note that degraded transmission fluid can lead to rough shifting, engine surges and unusual noises. Some vehicles include a dipstick to check transmission fluid levels, but many newer models may require a visit to a shop or dealership. Check your owner's manual.

WINDSHIELD WASHER FLUID

This easily overlooked item is crucial for safe driving as it keeps your windshield free from obstructions. Buy some at any auto parts store or full-service gas station. Locate the reservoir marked with the windshield wiper symbol under the hood and fill it to the line.



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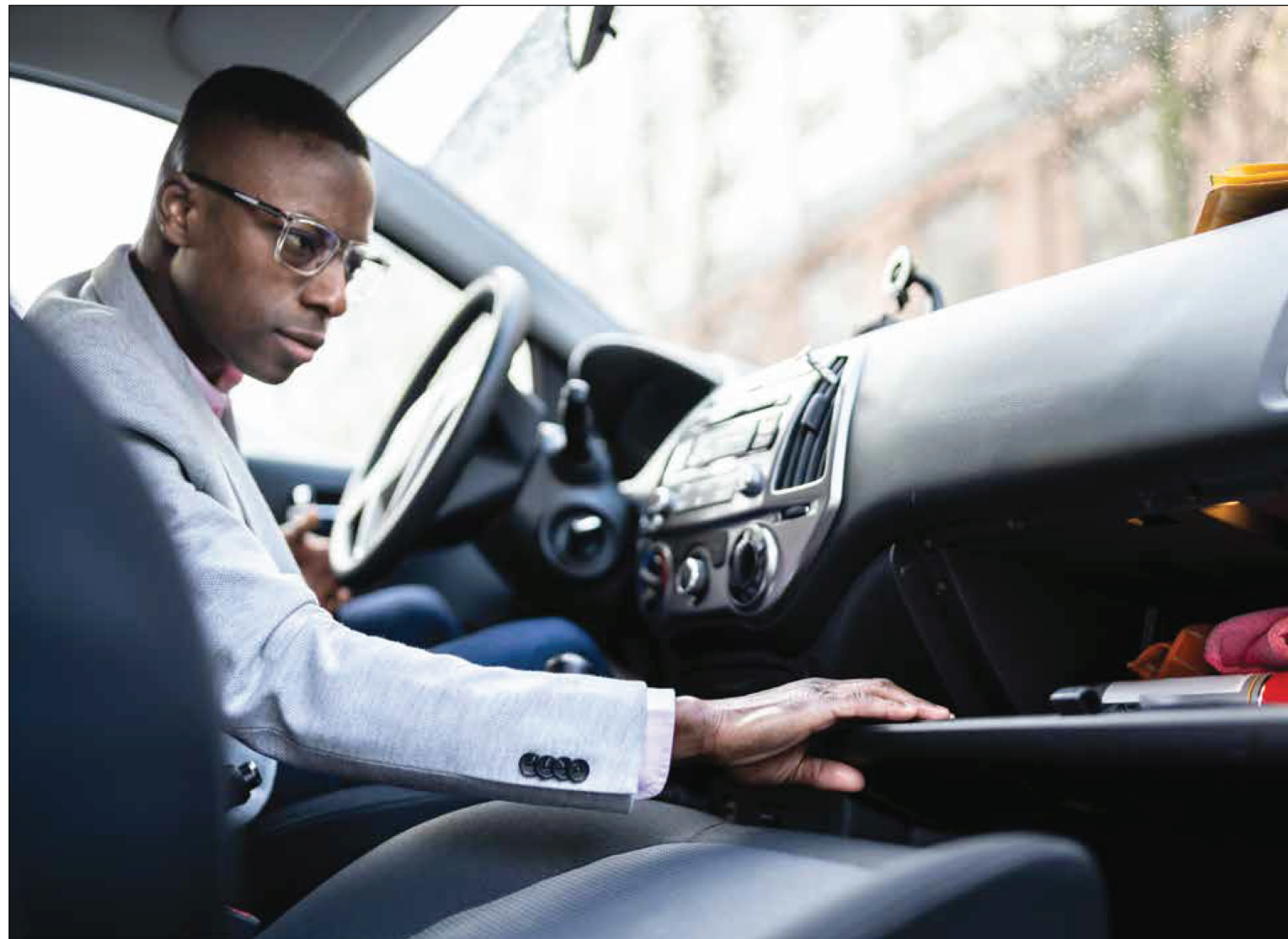
Busy summers can lead to the accumulation of a lot of things in our vehicles. Side pockets, trunks and glove compartments can begin to look like junk drawers.

Take advantage of the changing seasons to clear out the clutter, while making sure you have all the necessary documents and equipment in place so you're well prepared for a winter journey.

GLOVE COMPARTMENT

It can be tempting to use your vehicle's glove compartment as a temporary storage space for napkins, snacks, pens and pencils, receipts or wrappers because of its convenient location. Instead, optimize this space for more important items by tossing out unneeded items. Make sure you have all needed documents and they're up-to-date, including the car's registration and proof of insurance. They include details that need to be readily available in situations involving accidents or interactions with law enforcement.

Other helpful items can include relevant medical documentation, with information regarding allergies and any required medications for yourself, other drivers or



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regular passengers. Having this handy could prove invaluable in the event of an accident where you are unable to communicate. If there's room, keep your owner's manual in the glove compartment, as well. (If not, store it away in the trunk.) This book is essential to sorting out the problem if dashboard lights are activated. The manual will explain the

appropriate steps to take. It also serves as a valuable resource for tracking your vehicle's maintenance schedule.

TRUNK

Note that many manufacturers of contemporary vehicles no longer provide a spare tire or the tools necessary for repairs. Some used vehicles have lost these key items along

the way, as well. If needed, invest in your own spare tire to ensure you are prepared for any roadside emergencies. A full-sized tire is preferable, when possible, since it does not have the speed limitations associated with smaller donuts. Keep safe extra fluids on hand, including brake fluid and pre-mixed antifreeze, in case your vehicle requires maintenance while you are

away from home.

INSIDE

Don't forget the cabin of your car or truck. Consider hiring a professional detailing service to vacuum the carpets and polish all interior surfaces. Many modern cleaning products are specially designed to help protect the interior from regular wear-and-tear as well as damage from the sun.

Don't Forget Your Battery

Tucked away under the hood, it's easy to forget the spark that powers crucial elements of your vehicle.

Address any issues with your battery before you find yourself on the side of the road during the colder months. Sometimes, they run down because of natural wear-and-tear. In other cases, the vehicle may have simply been out of use for too long. Here's a checklist of essential maintenance tips.

WHEN TO REPLACE IT

Vehicle batteries typically have a lifespan of three or four years, depending on several factors. They naturally lose power over time, and older batteries may require additional attention. Periodically inspect your battery and its connections, especially if you've had your vehicle for several years. Examine all cables linking the battery to the vehicle for signs of damage or corrosion. Make sure the battery cables fit securely. If corrosion is causing them to loosen, use a wire brush to clean the affected areas.

Many local auto parts stores offer complimentary testing services to evaluate your battery's charge. While you're there, replace any needed connectors, cables or other battery components. If your battery is three years old or older or

shows signs of wear, it may be best to replace it to ensure optimal performance. Consider investing in a portable battery charger to keep in your vehicle's trunk for emergencies.

MAINTAINING A CHARGE

Batteries can lose their

charge if a vehicle is parked for an extended time. If you plan to store your vehicle during the fall and winter months, a trickle charger may be beneficial. This device connects your battery to a wall outlet, providing sufficient power to prevent charge loss. Of course, the

most cost-effective way to maintain your battery charge is to have someone drive your vehicle for approximately 15 minutes each day. This practice helps sustain the battery and keeps other components of the vehicle and engine functioning smoothly.

If daily driving support isn't an option, consider disconnecting the negative battery cable. Just remember that this approach has its drawbacks, as you will likely lose your vehicle's time and stereo settings. There may be other issues with its in-vehicle computer, as well.



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