

Winter Driving

Top tips to keep you safe on the road, whatever the weather



To help you prepare for dark mornings, glaring sun and slippery roads, we've created a quick guide full of tips, checks and essential kit to make sure you're ready for whatever the season has in store.

Always remember to do this...

Carry a pair of sunglasses

One of the most challenging parts of winter driving is low winter sun. It can hit the windscreen or reflect off wet roads, dazzling you and making it almost impossible to see. Carry a pair of sunglasses so that you don't get caught out.

Consider whether the journey is necessary

If the weather conditions are really bad, think about your journey and if it's absolutely necessary. If you can put it off to another time, consider staying at home, where it's warm and safe.

Take extra care and allow additional time

If you're driving in poor weather, take your time, slow down and make sure you keep a close eye on the road and traffic in front of you. It's sensible to avoid large puddles or floods - dips in the road can be hidden and, if the water is deep, it could damage your vehicle.

Keep your distance

Stopping distances can increase significantly in rain, snow and ice. In fact, they can double in rain and be ten times greater in snow and ice.

But try not to do this...

Drive too fast

Keep your speed down to make sure you have time to react. In snow, make sure you accelerate gently, try to use low revs and move to a higher gear as quickly as possible. If you're driving an EV, remember that it generally accelerates faster than a traditional vehicle, so it's even more important not to be too heavy on the pedal.

Brake suddenly

Try not to brake suddenly, as this could lock your wheels and cause a skid. Try to brake gently when coming up to a junction and accelerate as smoothly as possible when pulling away.

Use your fog lights unless they're needed

Your fog lights should only be used if the visibility is less than 100m, which is about the length of a football pitch. If the fog lifts, make sure you turn them off as they can be a distraction to other road users.

When did you last check your tyres?

Check your tyre pressure

The right tyre pressure supports safe steering, handling and braking, while reducing fuel consumption and unnecessary wear. Check pressures monthly and before long journeys with an accurate gauge. If you carry a spare, remember to check that it is road legal and you know how to fit it safely.

Wheel alignment

Misaligned wheels can affect vehicle handling, increase fuel consumption and cause abnormal, rapid tyre wear. If your vehicle has hit a kerb or pothole, or you notice uneven tyre wear, have the wheel alignment checked by a professional. This may incur a cost, but it is well worth it in the long run.

Check your tyre tread

For cars and light vans in the UK, the legal minimum tyre tread depth is 1.6mm across the central three-quarters of the tread and around the entire circumference of the tyre. Regularly checking the tyre tread depth ensures both road safety and vehicle performance.

Good driving habits

Although some wear and tear is inevitable, excessive braking, rapid acceleration, stop-start driving and hard cornering can all cause your tyres to wear more quickly. Remembering to drive carefully over uneven surfaces, potholes and speed humps can help to avoid tyre damage and potential wheel misalignment. Avoiding dirty areas of the road, gutters and ghost islands can reduce the likelihood of punctures.

Have you tried the 20p test?

Insert a 20p coin with a clear outer band into the main tread grooves. Remember to check several places around each tyre.

Is the band hidden? This indicates that the tread is currently above the legal minimum at the points tested.

Is the band visible? Your tyre may be below the legal minimum. Have it checked immediately by a tyre professional and replaced if necessary.



Things to check before you drive



Glass

Keeping the windscreen clean and clear isn't just crucial for safety. It's a legal requirement. Check it regularly for chips and cracks and make sure you use a good screenwash to avoid frozen washer jets.

In snow or heavy frost, take a little extra time before your journey to clear all the windows, lights, roof, and number plate.

Make sure you have some de-icer or an ice scraper and don't use hot water as it could cause cracks.

Don't leave your vehicle running unattended as this may invalidate your insurance.



Breakdown cover

Make sure you've got breakdown cover and check the details carefully. For example, does it provide assistance at your home address?



Tyres

Check your tyres regularly and before you set out on a long journey. Don't just top up the pressure. Make sure you do a visual check of the tread to look for cuts or bulges. And don't forget the spare tyre if you have one.

The minimum legal tread depth in the UK is 1.6mm, but experts suggest changing them before they reach that level. You can check if they're near the legal limit by feeling for a notch built into the main tread groove. Your tread should be higher up than this notch.



Fuel

Ensure you have more than enough fuel in your tank for the journey you plan to make. This will ensure you can keep the heating on if you are stuck in the snow or long traffic queues.



Wipers

Check your front and rear wipers for damage or splitting and replace them if necessary. Before setting out, make sure they are clear of frost.



Battery

Batteries have to work extra hard in the cold weather and are more likely to fail. If possible, inspect your battery and top it up with distilled water if necessary, or take it to a service centre that will often check it for free as part of a winter health check.



Servicing

Regular servicing is a vital part of vehicle health and a contractual obligation for leased vehicles. If you're due a service, consider getting it booked in before the weather gets too bad. Lots of companies now offer free winter health checks where they check tyres, brakes, and batteries.



Lights (front, back, sides)

Remember to check and clean your lights weekly and before any long journeys. Make sure they're clean, free of damage and cracks, and that all bulbs are working properly.

Tomorrow. Together



Essential kit

Keeping an emergency kit in your vehicle, especially if you're going on a long journey, will keep you warm if you break down or help you get moving again if you get stuck.



Winter driving tips

1. **Mobile phone**
   Always carry a charger and keep your mobile charged up so that you can call for help if it's required.
2. **Ice scraper and de-icer**
   Ensure you have a window scraper and plenty of de-icer in the vehicle.
3. **Blanket**
   The temperature can drop very quickly when the engine is not running, so always keep enough blankets for everyone in the vehicle to use.
4. **High-visibility vest and warning triangle**
   Whether you are stuck on a country lane or a motorway hard shoulder, you must ensure other drivers can easily see you and your vehicle.
5. **Torch**
   A good torch could be the difference between staying stuck and finding the fault and getting on your way.
6. **Shovel**
   In case you need to dig yourself out of mud, snow or ice.
7. **First-aid kit**
   Make sure you have a well-stocked first-aid kit with all the basics to deal with minor injuries.
8. **Tow rope**
   You never know when a passing motorist might be able to help out, but only if you have one of these.
9. **Tyre pump**
   It's not always possible to change a wheel at the side of the road, so make sure you have a working tyre pump that can get you to safety.
10. **Maps**
    Carry a map in your vehicle, even if you have a sat nav device or smartphone, just in case you lose mobile signal or run out of power.
11. **Spare bulbs**
    These could get you out of trouble, but make sure you can fit them yourself; otherwise they are simply extra fragile baggage.
12. **Jump leads**
    Carrying jump leads could allow another motorist to help you get moving again.
13. **Warm drinks and a snack**
    If you end up stuck, you'll be glad you stashed those chocolate bars in the glove box.
14. **Handbook and locking wheel nut key**
    Make sure you have the manufacturer's manual/ handbook and locking wheel nut key in the vehicle.
15. **Warm clothes and wellington boots**
    This might seem like overkill, but if you have to leave the vehicle, your clothes get wet, or you need to turn the heater off to save fuel, you'll be glad of the extra layers. Equally, you may be able to help someone else.

Tomorrow. Together

Winter tips for electric vehicles

Even when the temperature falls below zero, your electric vehicle will start up without any problems. However, the cold weather can have an impact on charging speeds and battery performance.

Here are a few quick tips to help you get the most out of your EV and stay safe, especially if this is your first winter with an electric car.

Range and charging speeds

Low temperatures can slow down the chemical reactions that absorb and release electricity. This means that charging can take a little longer and range is slightly reduced.

Some models mitigate the impact of cold weather through temperature regulation systems, but it's still a good idea to keep the vehicle plugged in when not in use.

Minimise energy consumption

Keeping your tyre pressure at the manufacturer's recommended levels, driving at moderate speeds and avoiding sudden acceleration or excessive braking can all help optimise your vehicle's driving range.

Limiting the use of temperature control systems and making use of any energy-saving driving modes can also help conserve energy.

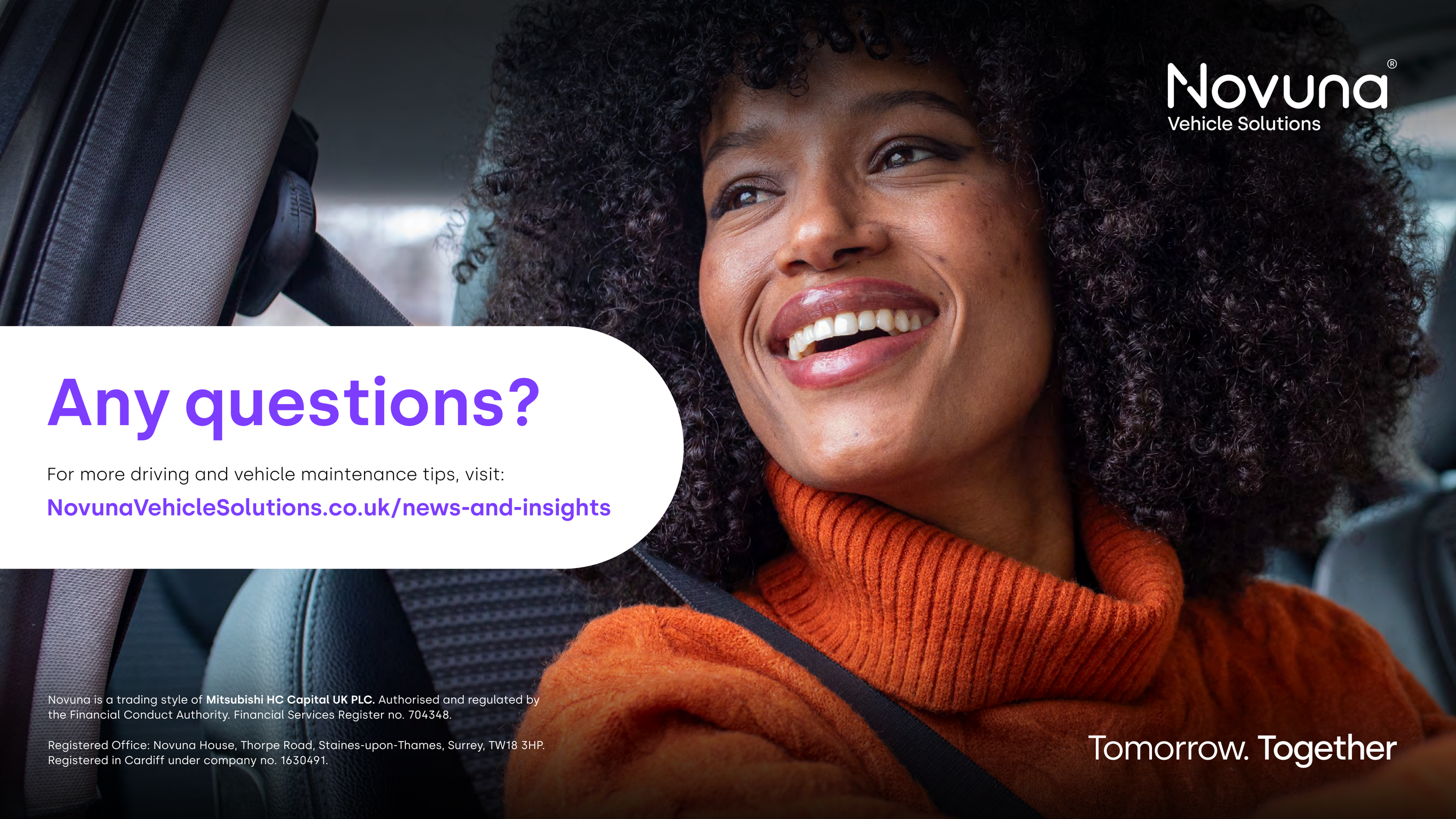
Gripping the road

Electric vehicles are typically heavier than many comparable petrol or diesel models.

A good set of winter tyres can help you grip the road in icy conditions but, as with any type of vehicle, it's important to drive more slowly in adverse weather conditions to give yourself more time to take evasive action if and when necessary.



Tomorrow. Together


Novuna®
Vehicle Solutions
Any questions?
For more driving and vehicle maintenance tips, visit:
NovunaVehicleSolutions.co.uk/news-and-insights
Novuna is a trading style of **Mitsubishi HC Capital UK PLC.** Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Financial Services Register no. 704348.
Registered Office: Novuna House, Thorpe Road, Staines-upon-Thames, Surrey, TW18 3HP. Registered in Cardiff under company no. 1630491.
Tomorrow. Together