

A driver's guide to servicing and MOTs

Tomorrow. Together

Contents

Easy access to vehicle servicing and support

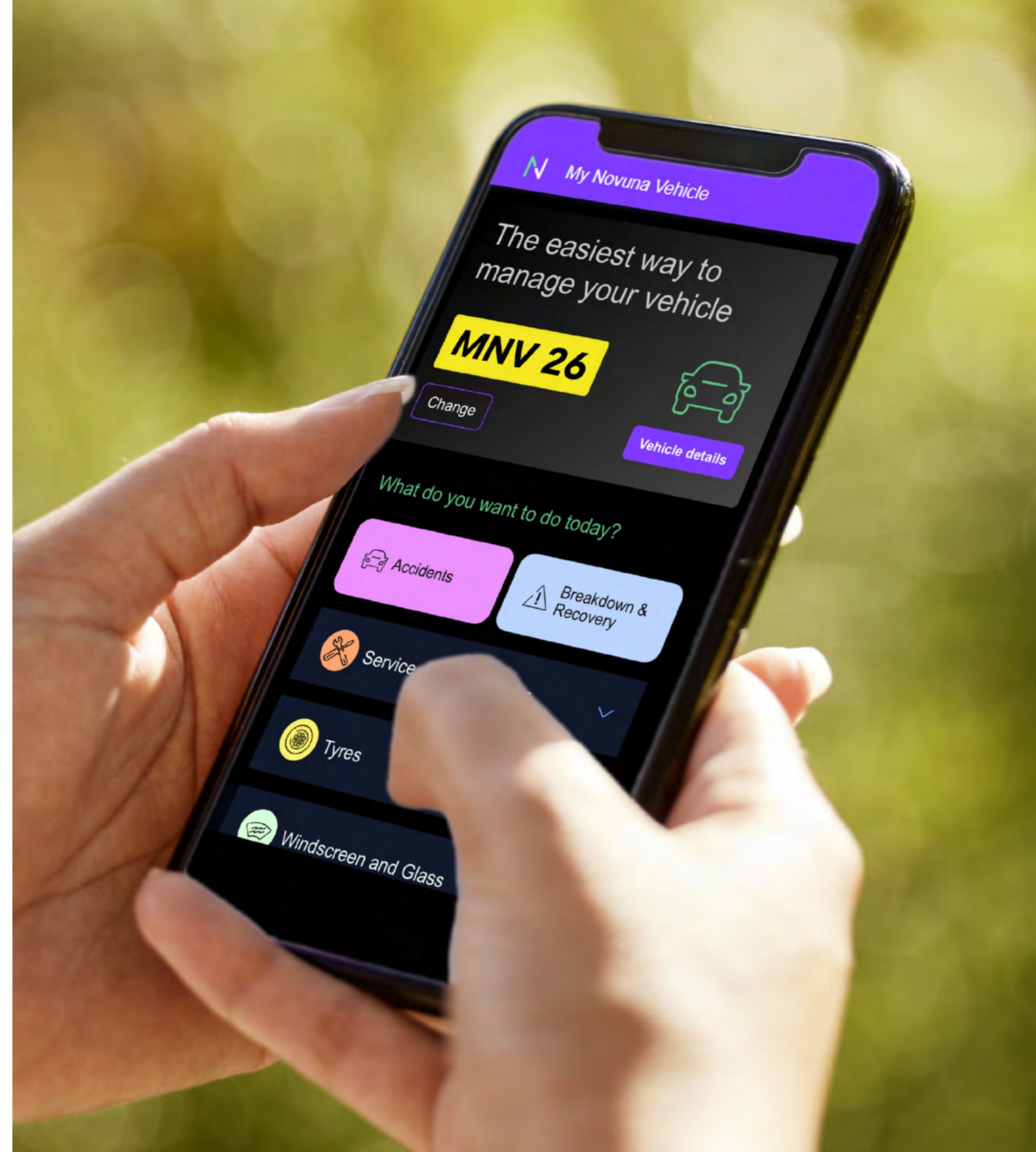
Servicing your car in line with the manufacturer's recommendations and guidelines is an essential part of looking after your vehicle.

We have thousands of quality approved service centres across the country, all of which have the latest diagnostic equipment and highly trained vehicle technicians who only ever fit manufacturer-approved parts and components.

If you have a maintained vehicle contract with us, go to mynovunavehicle.co.uk where you can:

- ✓ Book MOTs, servicing, and repairs through our nationwide network of 3,000+ approved suppliers
- ✓ Book tyre replacements and windscreen repairs
- ✓ Log accidents and breakdowns
- ✓ Keep a log of your vehicle mileage

Of course, if you need a little bit of extra help, just call your Driver Line or 0344 463 2900.



Looking after your car at home

No matter how many miles you drive each year, a few simple checks can make a big difference to vehicle safety, performance, and driver comfort.

From checking tyre pressure and oil levels to making sure that your lights and wipers are in full working order, these simple steps will keep your car running smoothly and safely.

They'll also help you spot potential issues early on, saving you time, money, and inconvenience further down the road.

Important: Always check the vehicle handbook for more specific information and guidance. If you are unsure as to how to carry out an inspection or the best way to fix a problem, then it's best to take your car to a quality approved garage.

Tyres

Regular inspections (at least once a month) are not just vital for safety and legal compliance; they can make a big difference to the fuel efficiency of your vehicle and the longevity of your tyres.

Check the tread

By law, each tyre needs to have at least 1.6mm of tread across the central three quarters of the tyre's width and around the entire outer circumference. That said, many safety experts recommend replacing tyres when the tread depth reaches 3mm.

If you already have a tyre depth gauge then it makes sense to use it, but it's just as easy to use a 20p coin. Simply insert the coin into the tread pattern at various positions across and around the tyre. If you can see the coin's outer band, arrange an accurate tread-depth check as soon as possible and replace the tyre if necessary.

Check the condition

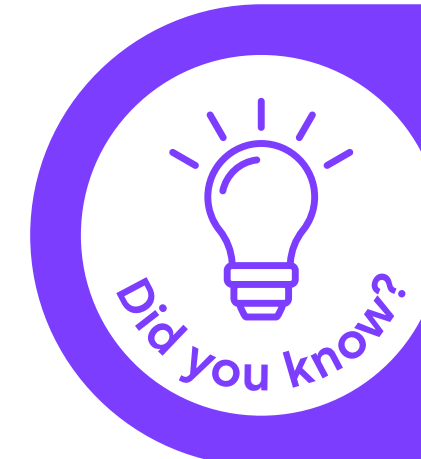
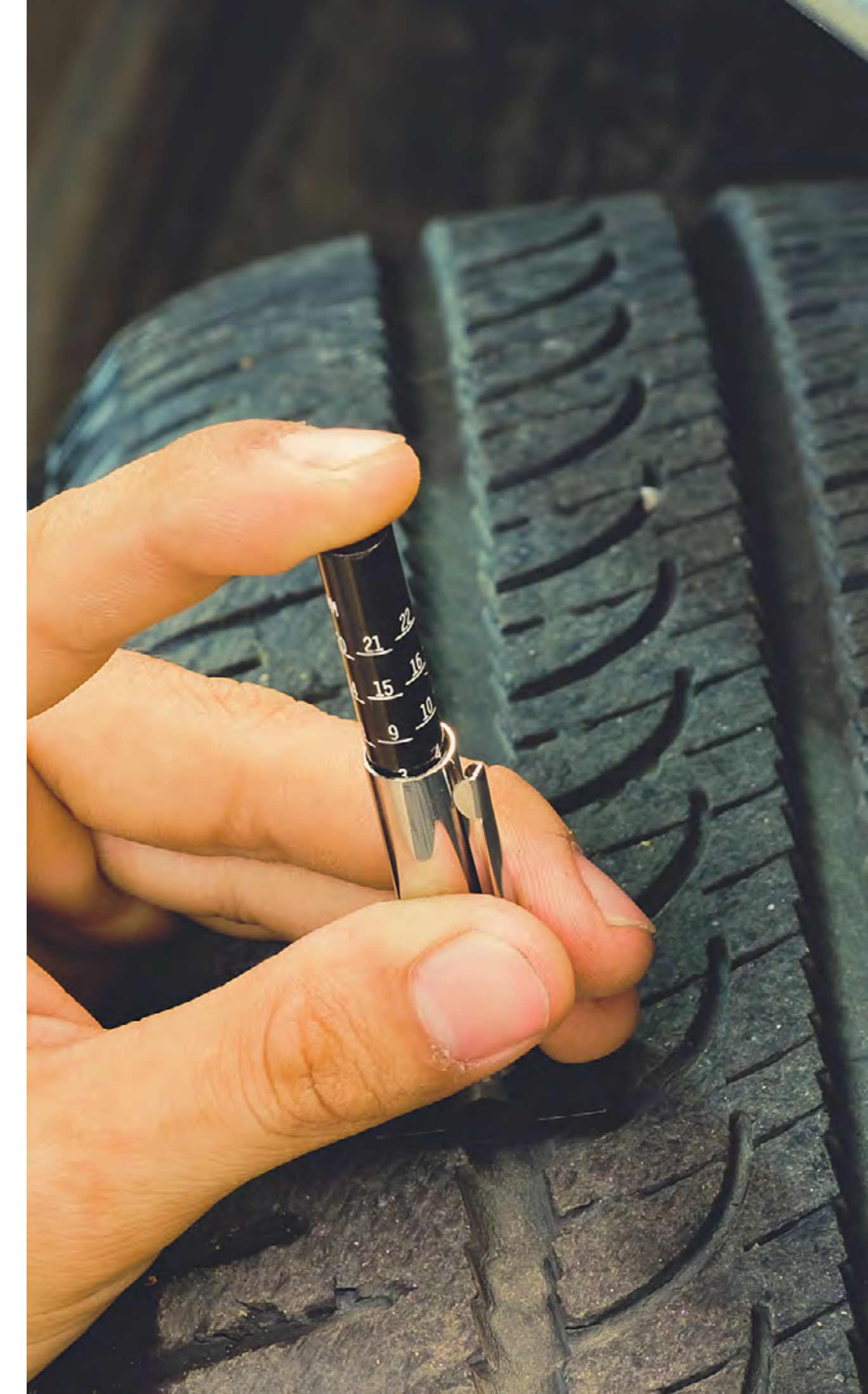
Visual inspections are important, but not all problems are easy to spot with the naked eye. Running your hand around the tyre can help identify lumps, bulges, or cuts that could easily cause a blowout.

To protect yourself, your passengers and other road users, any damage found must be fixed, or the tyre replaced, without delay. Any uneven wear could be an indication that the wheels are misaligned, which could therefore shorten the life of the tyre.

Check the pressure

Underinflated tyres can significantly reduce fuel economy. On the other hand, overinflation increases the risk of blowouts and can also lead to faster deterioration, reduced traction, and a bumpier ride.

At least monthly and before long journeys, first wait until the tyre is cold and then check the pressure against the manufacturer's recommendation for the load.



Driving with tyres below the legal tread depth can result in a **fine of up to £2,500** and three penalty points per tyre.



Windscreen and glass

The windscreen contributes to the vehicle's structural strength and, in many cars, supports correct deployment of the front passenger airbag.

Never ignore a cracked or chipped windscreen. Even a small crack can quickly worsen, obscuring vision and thus making the vehicle illegal to drive.

Keep driver-assistance cameras and sensors clean and unobstructed. If your windscreen is repaired or replaced, make sure any required recalibration is carried out in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

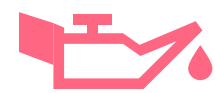
Wiper blades

If you notice any juddering, squeaking, or smearing of the windscreen then it could be time to change the blades.

Follow the handbook's instructions for putting the wipers into their service position and clean the blades with a damp cloth. Next, run your fingers along the window-facing edge and if you feel any rough, hard, or damaged edges then it is time for a replacement.

Oils, fluids, and lubricants

While it can be tempting to rely on dashboard warning lights, it is still a good idea to check the oil, fluid, and lubricant levels on a regular basis.



Oil

Wait until the engine is cool (about 15 minutes is usually enough) and make sure that the vehicle is level. Remove the dipstick from the engine, wipe it clean with a cloth, reinsert it and remove it again. The oil mark should be between the low and full marks.

Always consult the vehicle handbook and change oil in line with the manufacturer's guidelines.



Coolant

The engine must be completely cold before you can safely take an accurate reading, so you may need to wait a few hours, or even overnight.

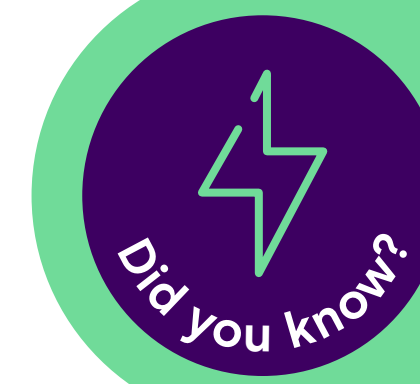
Most coolant expansion tanks have a minimum and maximum mark. The level should be well above the minimum level to prevent overheating, but don't overfill it as the coolant needs room to expand. Before topping up, always check the vehicle handbook to ensure you use the correct coolant and mix.



Screenwash

Most of us use more screenwash during the winter, but it's still important to check the reservoir and top it up throughout the year.

It's a good idea to keep some spare screenwash in the boot of your car, just in case you run out at the worst possible time.



Battery-electric vehicles don't have any engine oil to worry about, but you still need to **keep an eye on brake fluid, coolant, and screenwash.**



Power steering fluid

Power steering systems use hydraulic fluid, an electric motor/pump, or a combination of the two. When hydraulic fluid is used, regular checks will prevent component damage or a sudden loss of manoeuvrability.

To check the fluid, ensure the vehicle is level and the engine is cold. The reservoir can be found under the bonnet and will either have minimum and maximum markers or a dipstick. It is important not to overfill the reservoir because power steering fluid needs room to expand once heated.

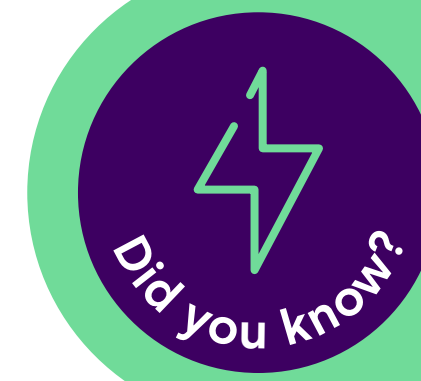


Brake fluid

In most cases, you will find the brake fluid reservoir under the bonnet with an appropriate label and a minimum level marker.

Your vehicle handbook will provide important information about the fluid to use but please be careful as brake fluid is corrosive, so it's best to cover any nearby paintwork and wear protective gloves.

Some EV manufacturers, including Tesla, specifically say not to top up the brake fluid and that coolant and brake fluid levels should only be checked by an approved repairer.



Although most EVs prioritise regenerative braking, many manufacturers recommend **changing the brake fluid in an electric car every 2–3 years**, depending on the specific model and driving conditions.

Batteries, bulbs, and indicators

Checking your bulbs and indicators is a lot easier with someone to help you. Simply turn the engine on (or to the first ignition position) and check each light in turn. Here's a quick checklist:

- ✓ Side lights
- ✓ Dipped beams
- ✓ Main beam
- ✓ Fog lights
- ✓ Front and rear indicators
- ✓ Brake lights
- ✓ Reversing lights
- ✓ Hazard lights

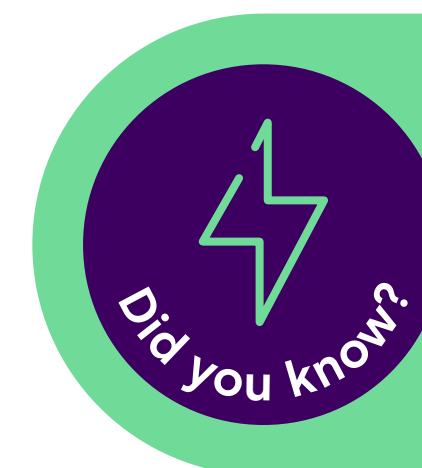
If you notice something isn't working or seems to be operating at less than full power, it's important to get any repairs or replacements carried out at your earliest opportunity.

Battery life varies greatly depending on use, alternator or connection faults, and even weather conditions. Some batteries have a visual indicator on the top. Generally, green will indicate that the battery has at least 75% charge. Below this it is usually black, and red almost certainly means dead.

Alternatively, you can use a multimeter to check the voltage. To do this, simply turn off the engine and wait for 15-30 minutes

before connecting the multimeter to the battery terminals. Although voltage is not the only measure of battery health, a conventional 12V lead-acid battery should have a voltage of 12.6–12.9 volts. Anything less than 12.4 volts and the battery may need to be recharged or replaced. If the battery bulges or emits an unusual smell, consult a qualified mechanic before use.

To prolong battery life, it is best to use your car at least once per week (at least 6 miles or 30 minutes), especially in winter. If you are not going to use your car for a month or more, you may want to use a trickle charger to avoid excessive battery drain.



Despite being built around a battery-driven electric motor, **EVs have an additional low-voltage battery** to power lights, locks, infotainment, and safety systems.

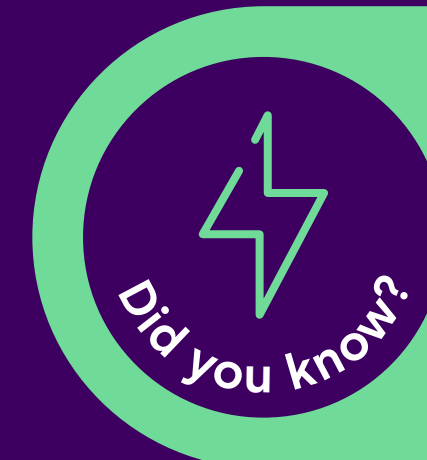
Brakes

Always check the manufacturer's handbook before topping up any fluids and remember, brake fluid is corrosive and so you will need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE).

In most cases, brake fluid shouldn't need attention between services. However, if the brake-fluid level falls, a brake warning appears or braking feels different to normal, this may indicate a leak, worn brake pads, or an issue with the brake lines. This should promptly be investigated by a qualified mechanic and appropriate action taken.

Most cars have a warning light to tell you that your brakes need checking but there are some other signs to look out for too, including:

- ✓ Taking longer to stop
- ✓ Vibration when braking
- ✓ Vehicle pulls to one side
- ✓ Any unusual noises
- ✓ Spongy brake pedal



Thanks to regenerative braking, **EV brake pads can last significantly longer** than you might expect. Often this can be twice, or even three times, as long as an ICE vehicle.

Suspension

One of the biggest threats to vehicle suspension is the UK's ubiquitous potholes, which can easily cause misalignment and damage to the shock absorbers.

Although there isn't much you can do to fix suspension issues at home, there are some clear signs of suspension problems that will require professional attention:

- ✓ A bumpy ride
- ✓ Pulling to one side
- ✓ Uneven tyre wear
- ✓ Leaning when parked
- ✓ Bouncing or instability
- ✓ Oily shock absorbers
- ✓ Unusual noises (especially when going over a bump)

One way to check your suspension at home is to push down on the vehicle and check how it responds. The vehicle should return to normal in a single bounce. If it bounces multiple times, this could indicate an issue with the shock absorbers.



Keep it clean

Regularly washing your car doesn't just keep it looking its best; it also helps prevent grit and dirt causing unnecessary wear, corrosion to the chassis, or damage to moving parts.

Bird mess can severely damage the paintwork, especially if it is left to bake on, and while salt spread by gritter lorries helps to keep the roads safer to use in icy conditions, it can also cause damage to your vehicle and should be washed off as soon as you can.

Handwashing is often better than automated car washes with stiff brushes that can leave lots of fine scratches on the paintwork.

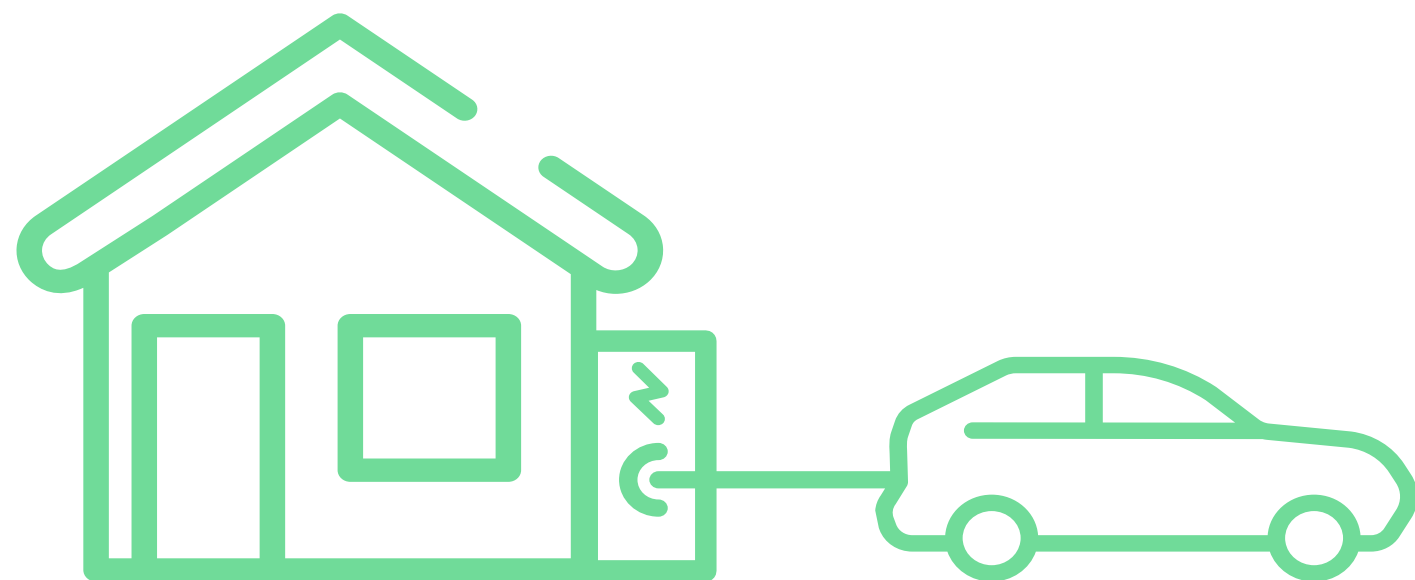
Polishing can help maintain the paintwork's finish, but it is still important to have any chips and signs of corrosion assessed and repaired promptly.

Looking after your EV at home

When it comes to home maintenance, electric cars have a lot more in common with their petrol or diesel counterparts than you might think.

For example, you still need to check tyre condition and pressures, and rotate tyres around the vehicle in line with manufacturer recommendations. You also need to make sure that wipers are in good working order, and keep all the lights clean and fully operational.

However, there are some important differences to be aware of. But first, it's important to remember that electric vehicles contain high-voltage components, so only carry out checks and any necessary remedial action as instructed by the manufacturer's handbook.





EV battery care

Battery technology is improving all the time and EVs can typically travel around 300 miles on a single charge. There have also been significant improvements to battery life and recent studies show that the health and efficiency of a new battery can degrade at around 2.3% per year, depending on the vehicle, charging routines and driving conditions.

Top tips to keep your EV battery at optimum health:

- ✓ Frequent harsh or rapid acceleration puts additional strain on the battery and could shorten its life.
- ✓ Avoid extreme temperatures. Park in the shade during summer and sunlight during winter (if you can).
- ✓ Typically, EV batteries perform best when kept between 20% and 80% charged, but new technologies mean it's more important than ever to check and follow the manufacturer's charging guidelines.
- ✓ Frequent use of rapid charging has the potential to accelerate battery degradation, but the impact is highly variable.

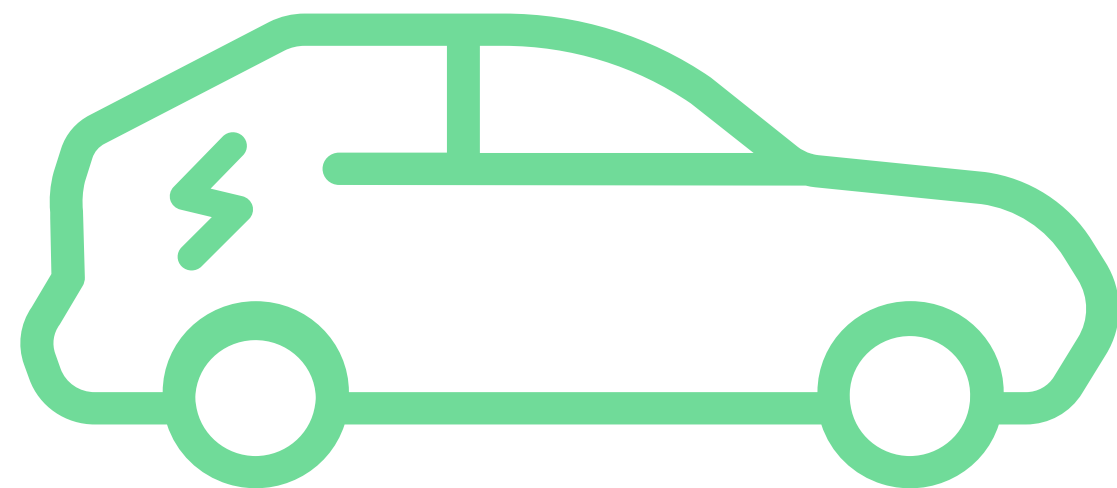
Brakes and fluids

Battery-electric vehicle drivers don't need to worry about engine oil, but you still need to keep an eye on brake fluid, coolant, and screenwash.

Regenerative braking can reduce brake-pad wear, but discs and pads still need regular inspection and it's worth remembering that less frequent use of friction brakes can allow corrosion to develop.

Brake fluid can still be contaminated by moisture from the air which, over time, has an impact on performance. Many manufacturers recommend changing the brake fluid in an electric car every 2–3 years but it can be longer for some.

Always check the vehicle's handbook before topping up as some manufacturers insist that this is carried out by an approved workshop.



Things to check before booking your MOT

In most cases, your first MOT is due three years after the vehicle was first registered. You can find the official registration date on the V5C logbook or by visiting vehicleenquiry.service.gov.uk.

Please be aware that, even for brand new cars, your vehicle's registration date is not necessarily the same as the delivery date.

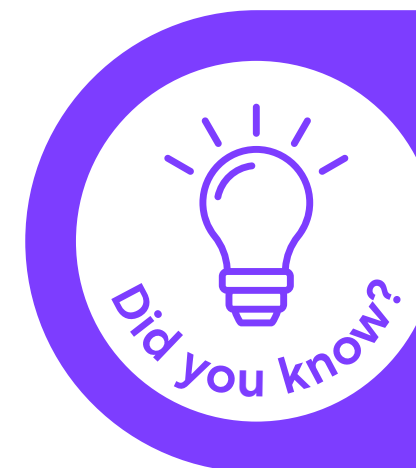
Remember, there is no grace period for MOTs, and it is illegal to drive a car without an MOT unless you are driving to an inspection that has already been booked or for repairs to be carried out.

Just under **30% of vehicles initially fail their MOT**, over half of which are for 'non-dangerous' faults. A few simple checks and, if necessary, remedial action can avoid any unwanted inconvenience and higher than necessary costs.



A list of key things to check before booking your MOT

- ✓ Windscreen wipers are undamaged, working properly, and there is no smearing after use
- ✓ All lights and indicators are working at full power, with no damage or fogging on the glass
- ✓ Tyres have a minimum of 1.6mm across the central three-quarters and around the full circumference
- ✓ Uneven tyre wear, which may indicate incorrect pressures or wheel misalignment
- ✓ Tyre pressure is within the range specified in the manufacturer's handbook
- ✓ Oil and screenwash levels are correct, with no fluid leaks or warning messages*
- ✓ The horn works properly and is loud enough for pedestrians and other drivers to hear
- ✓ Any chips, cracks, or other damage to the windscreen and rear window
- ✓ Mirrors are undamaged and firmly fixed in place
- ✓ Seat belts fasten securely, release correctly and retract properly
- ✓ The parking brake operates correctly, with no warning messages or unusual movement
- ✓ Seats and headrests are secure
- ✓ The car sits level, with no unusual suspension noises or excessive bouncing
- ✓ The number plate is readable (i.e. clean and complete)
- ✓ Consult an approved repairer if you can hear any strange noises from the engine or exhaust, or notice any out-of-the-ordinary fluid leaks or fumes.



Finally, it is always a good idea to clean and tidy the car. **Examiners can refuse to carry out an MOT** if they are unable to easily access all the areas they need to check.

* Always check the vehicle handbook before topping up any fluids.

Any questions?

Visit mynovunavehicle.co.uk to access key vehicle services and if you need a little extra help, just call your Driver Line or **0344 463 2900**

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