

BONUS 02 / 05 · CARS

THE CAR CARE TRACKER™

One vehicle's complete record: what the manual says, what was done, what's due next, and what it cost.

USE IT TO

01

Follow your owner's manual, not guesswork

02

Know what's due before the light comes on

03

Hand a shop (or a buyer) a clean history

WHAT'S INSIDE

15 pages · fillable PDF · print-friendly US Letter

01	Start here
03	Service & help directory
05	12-month maintenance planner
07	Service & repair history (2 pp.)
09	Brake inspection log
11	Estimates & yearly costs
13	Notes, sources & limits

02	Vehicle profile
04	My maintenance schedule
06	Monthly check-in log
08	Tire record
10	Registration, inspection & insurance
12	Recall checks

START HERE

SET UP ONCE • USE FOR YEARS

YOUR MANUAL SETS THE SCHEDULE.

- 01

Fill the profile
Copy the specs from your owner's manual and door placard onto the Vehicle Profile (p.3). Save the help directory (p.4).
- 02

Copy your schedule
Write YOUR manual's maintenance items and intervals on p.5. This tracker prints no intervals of its own.
- 03

Log as you go
Every service, repair, tire job and brake check goes in the logs. Do a quick check-in once a month (p.7).
- 04

Look ahead
Plan the next 12 months (p.6), track renewals (p.12) and check for recalls (p.14).

WHY NO INTERVALS ARE PRINTED HERE

Service intervals depend on the exact vehicle, engine, model year and how it's driven. Some manuals use time, some use miles, some use an electronic maintenance monitor, and many use "whichever comes first." The FTC's advice is to follow the manufacturer's maintenance schedule in your owner's manual.

So every interval field here is blank. Fill it in from your manual. If a shop recommends something extra, compare it with the manual and ask why (Field Manual Guide 10, p.45).

KEEP THE RECORD

The FTC notes that warranty companies can ask for your maintenance records, and advises keeping records of repairs and maintenance such as oil changes, tire rotations, brake pads and inspections.

File each receipt (paper folder or scanned), then tick **Receipt saved** in the log.

WHERE THE FIELD MANUAL HELPS

Dashboard warning lights: Guide 07, pp.30–34. **Tire checks:** Guide 08, pp.35–38. **Car won't start:** Guide 09, pp.39–42. **Reading a maintenance schedule:** Guide 10, pp.43–46. **Mechanic's estimates:** Guide 11, pp.47–50. **After an accident:** Guide 12, pp.51–54. The Field Manual tells you what to do in the moment. This tracker keeps the long-term record.

ONE VEHICLE PER COPY

Save a separate copy of this PDF for each vehicle, for example Car Care – 2019 Civic.pdf, or print one set per vehicle. The history logs run over two pages. Print extra copies when they fill up.

PRIVATE DETAILS

The VIN and plate fields are optional. If you share a copy with a buyer or a shop, think about what's on it. Never write insurance logins or payment card numbers here.

Educational record-keeping tool only. It doesn't diagnose problems or replace your owner's manual, a qualified technician or manufacturer instructions. Sources: p.15.

VEHICLE PROFILE

SET UP ONCE

KNOW YOUR VEHICLE.

The specs, page numbers and coverage you'll need at the counter, at the pump or on the roadside.

NICKNAME _____ YEAR / MAKE / MODEL _____

TRIM / ENGINE _____ POWERTRAIN (GAS • DIESEL • HYBRID • EV) _____

COLOR _____ PLATE (OPTIONAL) _____

VIN (OPTIONAL • KEEP PRIVATE) _____ DATE ACQUIRED _____

ODOMETER WHEN ACQUIRED _____ BOUGHT FROM _____

SPECS FROM MY OWNER'S MANUAL & DOOR PLACARD

copy exactly; don't guess

TIRE SIZE _____ COLD PRESSURE FRONT / REAR _____

SPARE / INFLATION KIT _____ ENGINE OIL SPEC / CAPACITY _____

FUEL TYPE / OCTANE _____ WIPER SIZES _____

12-VOLT BATTERY TYPE _____ KEY FOB BATTERY _____

WHERE TO FIND IT IN MY MANUAL

page numbers

MANUAL KEPT AT / LINK _____ MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE: PAGE _____

WARNING-LIGHT INDEX: PAGE _____ TIRES / FLAT TIRE: PAGE _____

JUMP-START / 12 V: PAGE _____ FLUIDS & CAPACITIES: PAGE _____

WARRANTY & COVERAGE

COVERAGE	ENDS (DATE)	ENDS (MILES)	WHO TO CALL	PAPERS KEPT AT
Basic / bumper-to-bumper				
Powertrain				
Hybrid / EV battery (if any)				

WHO YOU CALL, BEFORE YOU NEED THEM.

Save these numbers in your phone too. A dead battery is a bad time to search for a tow company.

MECHANIC / SHOP

NAME _____
PHONE _____
ADDRESS / WEBSITE _____
HOURS / NOTES _____

DEALER SERVICE

NAME _____
PHONE _____
ADDRESS / WEBSITE _____
HOURS / NOTES _____

TIRE SHOP

NAME _____
PHONE _____
ADDRESS / WEBSITE _____
HOURS / NOTES _____

BODY SHOP

NAME _____
PHONE _____
ADDRESS / WEBSITE _____
HOURS / NOTES _____

TOWING

NAME _____
PHONE _____
ADDRESS / WEBSITE _____
HOURS / NOTES _____

ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE

NAME _____
PHONE _____
ADDRESS / WEBSITE _____
HOURS / NOTES _____

INSURER: CLAIMS

NAME _____
PHONE _____
ADDRESS / WEBSITE _____
HOURS / NOTES _____

OTHER

NAME _____
PHONE _____
ADDRESS / WEBSITE _____
HOURS / NOTES _____

Roadside help may come with insurance, a membership, the warranty or a card. Check before you need it. After a crash: Field Manual Guide 12, pp.51–54.

COPIED FROM
MY OWNER'S MANUAL.

Every interval here comes from YOUR vehicle's manual or maintenance booklet. If an item isn't in the manual, it doesn't go on this page.

SOURCE: MANUAL / BOOKLET / PORTAL SEVERE-SERVICE SCHEDULE APPLIES? (Y/N)

ITEM (AS THE MANUAL WORDS IT)	ACTION INSPECT / REPLACE	EVERY MILES	EVERY MONTHS	LAST DONE DATE	LAST DONE MILES	NEXT DUE DATE	NEXT DUE MILES	DONE ✓
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								☐
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								☐
								☐

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN YOUR MANUAL

Only copy items your manual actually lists. Common ones: engine oil and filter · tire rotation · engine and cabin air filters · brake inspection · brake fluid · coolant · transmission fluid · spark plugs · wipers · 12-volt battery check · EV/hybrid-specific items. Watch for “whichever comes first” and maintenance-monitor wording (Field Manual Guide 10, p.44).

NEXT DUE = LAST DONE + INTERVAL (DATE AND MILES)

Work out both. Whichever arrives first is when it's due, if your manual says “whichever comes first.” If your car uses a maintenance monitor, write “per monitor” and log when it alerts.

WHAT'S COMING THIS YEAR.

Look a year ahead so a big service or a set of tires is planned for, not a surprise.

01 _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ EST. \$ _____ BOOKED _____	02 _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ EST. \$ _____ BOOKED _____	03 _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ EST. \$ _____ BOOKED _____
04 _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ EST. \$ _____ BOOKED _____	05 _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ EST. \$ _____ BOOKED _____	06 _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ EST. \$ _____ BOOKED _____
07 _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ EST. \$ _____ BOOKED _____	08 _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ EST. \$ _____ BOOKED _____	09 _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ EST. \$ _____ BOOKED _____
10 _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ EST. \$ _____ BOOKED _____	11 _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ EST. \$ _____ BOOKED _____	12 _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ ☐ _____ EST. \$ _____ BOOKED _____

Fill each block with a month and year, starting with next month. Copy in the items from your schedule (p.5) that come due, estimate the cost, and tick each item when done. Add the yearly total to the Money Snapshot's Irregular & Annual Costs page.

A QUICK LOOK, ONCE A MONTH.

Odometer, tire pressures, tread and anything new you've noticed. Over a few months, the trend shows a slow leak or uneven wear.

PLACARD COLD PSI: FRONT

PLACARD COLD PSI: REAR

DATE	ODOMETER	FL PSI	FR PSI	RL PSI	RR PSI	SPARE PSI	LOWEST TREAD /32	LIGHTS / LEAKS / NOISES NOTICED	AIR ADDED	FOLLOW UP
									☐	☐
									☐	☐
									☐	☐
									☐	☐
									☐	☐
									☐	☐
									☐	☐
									☐	☐
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									☐	☐
									☐	☐
									☐	☐
									☐	☐
									☐	☐

WHAT NHTSA SAYS

Check all tires, including the spare, at least once a month when cold (not driven for at least three hours), and check tread at the same time. Replace tires worn to 2/32 inch. Use the pressure on your vehicle's placard, not the number on the tire.

WHEN TO STOP AND GET HELP

Bulge, cut, exposed cord or rapid pressure loss: see a tire professional, because air doesn't make it safe (Field Manual p.37). Red warning light: act now (Guide 07, pp.30–34).

One line per visit or job, newest at the bottom. Keep the receipt with the record.

[illegible]

Log maintenance, repairs, recalls, inspections and DIY work. Write the part or fluid spec when you know it. When you finish a scheduled item, update **Last done** and **Next due** on p.5.

EVERYTHING THAT

WAS DONE. (2 OF 2)

DATE	ODOMETER	WORK DONE / FINDING	SHOP	COST \$	WARRANTY	RECEIPT SAVED	NEXT DUE
					☐	☐	
					☐	☐	
					☐	☐	
					☐	☐	
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					☐	☐	
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					☐	☐	
					☐	☐	

Log maintenance, repairs, recalls, inspections and DIY work. Write the part or fluid spec when you know it. When you finish a scheduled item, update **Last done** and **Next due** on p.5.

TIRE RECORD

UPDATE AT EACH TIRE SERVICE

THE TIRES ON THIS VEHICLE.

Brand, size, age codes and every rotation or repair, so you can see wear patterns and warranty claims at a glance.

CURRENT TIRE SET

BRAND / MODEL
INSTALLED (ODOMETER)

SIZE
SHOP

INSTALLED (DATE)
TREAD WARRANTY MI.

POSITION	DOT DATE CODE (LAST 4 DIGITS)	WEEK / YEAR	NOTES (REPAIRS, PLUGS, DAMAGE)
Front left			
Front right			
Rear left			
Rear right			
Spare			

ROTATIONS, REPAIRS, ALIGNMENTS & REPLACEMENTS

DATE	ODOMETER	SERVICE	SHOP	COST \$	TREAD AFTER /32 LOWEST

The last four digits of the DOT code show the week and year the tire was made: **2223** = week 22 of 2023 (Field Manual p.36). Some makers recommend age-based replacement. Check your tire and vehicle maker's guidance.

WHAT THE SHOP FOUND.

A running record of each brake inspection, so you can see wear over time and judge whether a recommendation fits the history.

DATE	ODOMETER	INSPECTED BY	FRONT PADS (AS REPORTED)	REAR PADS / SHOES (AS REPORTED)	ROTORS / DRUMS	BRAKE FLUID	RECOMMENDED	DONE ✓
								☐
								☐
								☐
								☐
								☐
								☐
								☐
								☐
								☐
								☐

ASK FOR THE MEASUREMENT

Ask the shop to write down what they measured (for example pad thickness) and what the manufacturer's minimum is. Record it exactly as reported. This log doesn't ask you to measure brakes yourself. A brake inspection is a job for a qualified technician.

DON'T WAIT ON THESE

If the BRAKE warning stays on, braking feels different or the pedal is soft, stop safely and arrange assistance (Field Manual p.31). An ABS-only warning is different, but still needs diagnosis. Brake repairs can be safety-critical, so don't postpone a confirmed defect (Field Manual p.49).

SYMPTOMS TO TELL THE SHOP (NOISE, PULLING, VIBRATION, WARNING LIGHTS, WHEN IT HAPPENS)

REGISTRATION, INSPECTION & INSURANCE.

Due dates you can't afford to miss. A lapsed registration or insurance policy can cost far more than the renewal.

ITEM	DUE DATE	COST \$	RENEWED ON	CONFIRMATION / PROOF KEPT AT	REMINDER SET	DONE ✓
Registration					☐	☐
Registration (next)					☐	☐
Safety / emissions inspection (if required)					☐	☐
Inspection (next)					☐	☐
Auto insurance term					☐	☐
Auto insurance (next)					☐	☐
Driver's license					☐	☐
Driver's license (2nd driver)					☐	☐
Roadside membership					☐	☐
Toll / parking permit					☐	☐
					☐	☐
					☐	☐
					☐	☐
					☐	☐

REQUIREMENTS VARY BY STATE

Whether you need a safety or emissions inspection, how often you register, and what proof of insurance you must carry all depend on your state. Check your state's motor vehicle agency website and the renewal notice itself. Renewal notices can go to an old address, so set your own reminder.

AT RENEWAL TIME

Before an insurance renewal, compare the new premium, coverage and deductibles with last term (the Life Admin Organizer has an insurance overview page). Keep the current insurance card in the vehicle or app as your state requires.

WHAT IT REALLY COST.

Track estimate against invoice, and see what this vehicle costs you each year.

ESTIMATE VS FINAL INVOICE Field Manual Guide 11, pp.47-50

DATE	JOB / CONCERN	ESTIMATE \$	APPROVED UP TO \$	FINAL INVOICE \$	DIFFERENCE \$	SHOP	WARRANTY CLAIM
							☐
							☐
							☐
							☐
							☐
							☐
							☐
							☐
							☐

Difference = Final invoice – Estimate. If the final bill is higher than the amount you approved, ask how the extra work was authorized. Many states have written-estimate rules (Field Manual p.47).

YEARLY COST OF OWNERSHIP

YEAR	MAINTENANCE \$	REPAIRS \$	TIRES \$	INSURANCE \$	REGISTRATION & FEES \$	FUEL / CHARGING \$	OTHER \$	TOTAL \$

Add up each category from the history log and your records. Total = the sum of the row. Watching repairs per year is one way to judge when keeping a car stops making sense.

RECALL CHECKS

CHECK A FEW TIMES A YEAR

FREE REPAIRS YOU MIGHT BE MISSING.

Safety recalls are repaired through the manufacturer. Check this vehicle by VIN, then log the result.

DATE CHECKED	CHECKED WHERE	RESULT	RECALL / CAMPAIGN NO.	REPAIR APPOINTMENT	REPAIR DONE	PROOF KEPT
					☐	☐
					☐	☐
					☐	☐
					☐	☐
					☐	☐
					☐	☐
					☐	☐
					☐	☐
					☐	☐
					☐	☐

HOW TO CHECK

NHTSA's free lookup at nhtsa.gov/recalls tells you whether a specific vehicle needs to be repaired as part of a recall when you search by VIN or license plate. Searching by year, make and model gives only general results. Your VIN is on your registration, insurance card and the driver-side dashboard or door jamb.

Check when you acquire the vehicle, before long trips, and whenever you get a recall notice in the mail. Then log the result here.

RECALL REPAIRS

Recall remedies are arranged through the manufacturer's process, usually at a dealer, and NHTSA says the recalled part is fixed for free (Field Manual p.45; NHTSA). Ask the dealer to confirm the campaign number on the invoice, and keep that invoice.

NHTSA also covers car seats, tires and equipment. If you have them, add their recalls here.

NOTES

NOTES, SOURCES & LIMITS

HOW THIS
WAS BUILT.

YOUR NOTES

SOURCES (CHECKED OCTOBER 2026)

FTC: Auto Repair Basics. “Follow the manufacturer's maintenance schedule in your owner's manual”; compare shop schedules with those in your owner's manual. consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0211-auto-repair-basics

NHTSA: Tires. Check pressure of all tires, including the spare, at least once a month when cold (not driven for at least three hours); replace at 2/32 inch; use the placard pressure. nhtsa.gov/vehicle-safety/tires

The Adulting Field Manual™, Guides 07–12 (pp.30–54): warning lights, tire checks, no-start triage, maintenance schedules, estimates, accidents.

FTC: Auto Warranties and Auto Service Contracts. The warranty company could ask for your maintenance records; keep records of repairs and maintenance. consumer.ftc.gov/articles/auto-warranties-and-auto-service-contracts

NHTSA: Check for Recalls. Search by license plate or VIN to learn whether a specific vehicle needs a recall repair; providing your VIN is voluntary. nhtsa.gov/recalls

Not included on purpose: service intervals, brake measurements, tire-age limits and state inspection rules. They vary by vehicle and state, so they come from your manual, your technician and your state agency.

IMPORTANT

This toolkit provides general educational information and record-keeping tools only. It is not mechanical, legal or other professional advice, and it does not diagnose vehicle problems. Follow your owner's manual and manufacturer instructions, and use a qualified technician for inspection and repairs. To the fullest extent permitted by law, Stuff Nobody Taught Us disclaims liability for any loss, damage or injury arising from use of this toolkit. Full notice: The Adulting Field Manual™, p.148.