

# 5 Parts of Your Car You Might Not Know Need Maintenance

Your car is a marvelously complex machine, one that performs as you ask it (for the most part) day in and day out through all kinds of weather. All it asks in return is for a little tender-loving care from time to time. Stuff like an oil change. Maybe a coolant flush now and again. Or new transmission fluid at least once in its life.

But chances are good there are a few maintenance items your car might require that you've never heard of. Read on to find out what those are.

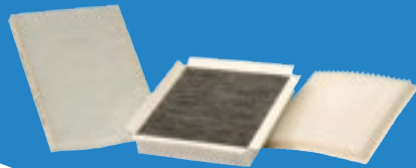
## 1. SPARK PLUGS



True, you know your car has spark plugs. But did you know it's highly likely that your owner's manual says they should be replaced every few years or so. Read your owner's manual for details—or better yet ask your favorite auto service technician for the 411 about your spark plugs—but the long and short is that most automakers recommend replacing spark plugs at about 100,000 miles, and some may even require replacement sooner. If you've ever driven a car with a spark plug that won't fire (and I have), you'll know it is not a smooth experience.

## 3. CABIN AIR FILTERS

If your car was built in the last decade or so, chances are fairly good it was equipped with a cabin air filter. This filter, much like the one in your house's heating/cooling system, screens dust and debris out of the air entering your car's passenger compartment. Many automakers recommend replacing these filters on an annual basis, and doing so will greatly improve the quality of air you're breathing while driving. It's definitely worth asking your auto service technician whether your car is equipped with such a filter.



## 4. SEAT VENTILATION FILTERS

In recent years more and more automakers have been equipping vehicles with ventilated seats, i.e. seats that have a built-in heating and cooling system. (They are especially common in many Nissan, Ford and GM vehicles.) But if you drive a car equipped with one of these comfy seats, you need to know that the seat's ventilation system has a filter that needs to be replaced on a periodic basis. The filter acts to screen out dust that can clog the tiny pores that circulate air through the seat. Let that filter accumulate too much dust or debris, and your cozy seat may no longer work as advertised.

## 2. BATTERY COOLING SYSTEMS

Do you drive a hybrid vehicle? If so it is highly likely your car has a dedicated cooling system for the vehicle's electronics and/or battery. Some vehicles (the new Chevrolet Volt, for instance) even have two dedicated cooling systems, one for the battery and one for the electric motor. Just like the coolant in a traditional car's engine needs to be changed



from time to time, the coolant in these cooling systems will also need replacing at scheduled intervals. Consult your owner's manual to find out what those intervals are.

## 5. GEARBOX FLUID

You know all about your car's coolant and transmission fluid, but did you know there's another type of oil that most automakers recommend replacing at dedicated intervals? Your car's gearbox (also commonly called a differential) contains a lubricating oil (and often special additives) that's heavier than motor oil. This gear oil can wear over time, especially in larger vehicles like pickups or SUVs that do heavy jobs like towing or hauling the family around.

While this list contains many of the services drivers might not be aware of, it is by no means comprehensive. The best way to find out what maintenance services your car requires is to consult your owner's manual or ask your auto service facility to perform a thorough inspection based on available service requirements. It's the best way to show your car all the love it needs. +