



If your car needs regular service, get it done now.

Breaking down in the winter months can be very dangerous for you and your family. Get all services that your car needs done so that you can avoid being stuck on a cold, slick road.



Make sure your battery and charging system are up to date.

Your mechanic should check the battery, charging system, and belts. It takes more battery power to start a cold car than a warm one, so make sure that your car's system can support it at the cold temperatures.

Check the cooling system.

Make certain the antifreeze will protect your car at the winter temperatures you'll experience in your area.

Make sure your windshield wipers are in good shape.

Be sure your current wiper blades clean the windshield well, and allow you to see clearly in wet weather. Even when there's no active precipitation, water from melting snow and slush or truck tires is often thrown up onto your windshield.

Keep your gas tank close to full, for a couple of reasons.

In the winter, if you do get stuck or stranded, the engine will be your only source of heat.

Make sure your windshield washer reservoir is full.

On a snowy or messy day, you can easily go through half a gallon or more of windshield washer fluid trying to keep your windshield clear. For that reason, it's also a good idea to keep some extra fluid in the trunk in case you run out.

Know your car.

Every car has different handling characteristics. You should know what your car can and cannot do in the snow. You should know if you have front, rear, part-time or full-time four-wheel drive; antilock brakes; traction control; and stability control. You should know what kind of tires are on the car, and how all those things work and how they help you or don't help you.

Make sure you have some basic supplies in your car in case you do get stuck.

Invest in a substantial snowbrush and an ice scraper. It's good to have a shovel and a bag of sand to help with traction. A blanket is a good idea — just in case. If you have any winter clothes you don't wear anymore, especially an old pair of boots, throw them in the trunk, too.



When driving in the snow, do everything slowly.

Even with good coolant, snow tires, stability control and all-wheel drive, keep in mind that driving in snow, sleet, and ice is very treacherous. And even if you maintain control of your car, not everyone else will. So don't ever get lulled into a false sense of security. Do everything slowly and gently. Remember, in the snow, the tires are always just barely grabbing the road. Accelerate slowly and gently, turn slowly and gently, and brake slowly and gently. To do this, you have to anticipate turns and stops

If you're nervous about driving in winter, consider spending some time practicing. Go to an empty parking lot and try sending the car into a little skid on purpose. Slam on the brakes, then practice turning into the skid and see what happens — and practice until you're comfortable regaining control of the car.