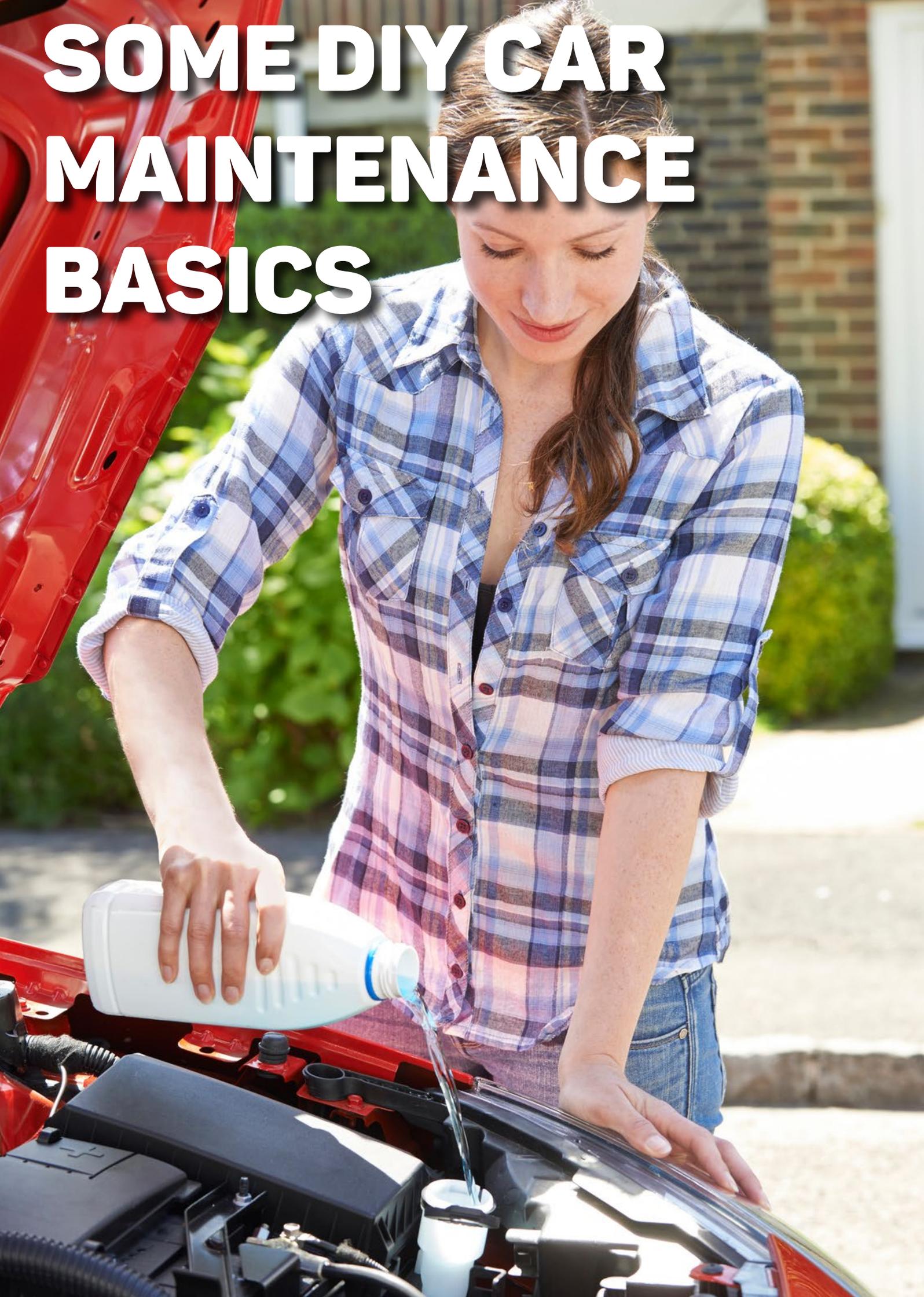


SOME DIY CAR MAINTENANCE BASICS



Regular car maintenance is vital for a healthy car and in turn makes driving safer for you.

CHECKING ENGINE OIL

On level ground with the engine off, clean the dipstick with a lint-free cloth while the engine is still warm. Reinsert the dipstick fully, remove it and check oil level. If the reading is low, top up using the grade of oil recommended by your vehicle's manufacturer.

CHECKING RADIATOR COOLANT

While the engine is cold, remove the radiator cap, check inside the radiator and fill it up if required. A temperature gauge won't read correctly when there is no coolant in the system, so don't rely on it if you haven't topped it up for a while.

While the engine is cold, feel the hoses and if they are hard and you can hear a 'cracking' noise, or if they feel very soft or swollen in places, get them changed. Have a mechanic change the coolant every two years.

CHECKING AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION AND POWER STEERING FLUIDS

Procedures vary from car to car, so check your owners' manual.





CHECKING YOUR BATTERY

If your battery has removable caps, check that the fluid inside is about 5mm above the plates or between the levels indicated on the case. Be careful as battery acid can cause serious injury.

If low, top up with distilled water and avoid overfilling. Don't expose a battery to a naked flame and remember battery fluid is corrosive and can damage paint and wiring.

Pull back the terminal covers and check that the wiring around the negative and positive terminals is in good condition. If you see any corrosion build-up, dissolve with hot water or bicarbonate soda.

CHECKING YOUR BRAKES

Check the fluid level in the master cylinder (usually located near the right-hand corner in front of the driver's seat). If the level is low, the disc pads could be worn. If the level keeps dropping get it checked immediately for leaks. Have a mechanic flush the fluid every two years, as it absorbs moisture. Watch out for noises while braking and pulsations in the brake pedal. Don't attempt maintenance on brakes yourself, get a professional to do it.

CHECKING YOUR TYRES

Check and adjust tyre pressure when the tyres are cold. You'll find a tyre pressure placard on the inside of your glovebox, fuel cap filler or the driver's door.

Check for a minimum tread depth of 1.5mm on any part of the tyre surface that comes in contact with the road and look for abnormal wear or damage. Adjusting the pressure to the top of the recommended range reduces fuel consumption and wear.

CHECKING YOUR WHEELS

If you need to turn the wheel constantly to the left or right to make the car go straight ahead, or if it pulls to one side when you let go of the steering wheel, you may need a wheel alignment.

CHECKING YOUR HEADLIGHTS

Check all lights are working, including stop and reverse lights. Drive up to a reflective surface if you cannot get someone to help you check this.

CHECKING YOUR WINDSCREEN WIPERS AND WASHER FLUID

Fill washer bottle with clean water and the right amount of washer additive, not household detergent. Check the condition of the wiper blades and replace if split, perished or not wiping properly. Run your thumb and finger along the wiper blade to remove any gunk.

CHECKING YOUR INSIDE CONTROLS

With the engine switched off, check all controls for tightness and function. Put the steering wheel in position so the tyres point straight ahead. Lightly swing the steering wheel from side to side, free play should not exceed 50mm.

SERVICING

New cars should be serviced according to outlines in your owner's manual. It's essential not to miss the oil changes. Older cars should have an oil and filter change every six months or 10,000km, whichever comes first.

