



Before heading off on your next trip, make sure that your 4WD vehicle is in tip-top shape and is well stocked so that you are safe and prepared for whatever comes your way. Here is the essential guide to making sure your 4WD is ready for adventure to reduce your risk or accidents, breakdowns and more.

Ensuring that your vehicle is in good condition is just about the most important thing you should do before heading away on an adventure whether its heading down to the beach for the weekend or crossing the Simpson Desert. Not only should the vehicle be in good condition, serviced regularly and thoroughly checked before you head away, you should also check the vehicle daily whilst your away to ensure you get to your destination and home again safely.

I know I've said it before, but let me start by saying that your vehicle should be checked by a qualified mechanic before your trip. Tell them where you are going and what you are doing to give them a good idea of what the vehicle needs to be prepared to do. If you own a 4wd, take the vehicle to a mechanic that specialises in 4wd servicing and repairs as they will often know that little bit more about what to look for, especially before a big 4wd trip in remote areas.

Below are some basic areas of the vehicle to check before, during and after your trip. Of course these aren't the only things to look at and some vehicles will have specific areas that need more attention than other but it's a good place to start!

Check Your Engine Oil

- Ensure your vehicle has had regular oil changes and has the correct amount of oil in it. If you've never checked the oil before get your mechanic to show you how to check its level, and where/how to fill it.
- Make sure you use the correct oil; as the saying goes "Oils aint oils" and you can't use just any old engine oil. Using a cheap or incorrect type of oil can ruin your engine!
- Make sure you take some spare oil with you just in case.
- It can be a good idea to clean you engine and engine bay with degreaser top and bottom a few weeks before you go away. A clean engine will make it easier to spot any oil leaks that may need some attention.

Check Your Coolant

- Make sure you radiator has the correct amount of coolant and the correct type of coolant in it.
- If your vehicle has a history of getting a little warm, perhaps when climbing hills in hot weather or you are constantly topping it up with fluid, you may need to get your cooling system checked before you head away.
- A proper engine coolant will work much better than water as it is non corrosive and will have a much higher boiling point and lower freezing point than water.



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- Water is ok if your desperate but try to keep your vehicle full of coolant.
- If you're heading to the snow you may need to put an anti freeze additive in your radiator.
- Check with your mechanic or even at the service stations located near the snow as most of them will have a good idea and even be able to test your radiator to see if it has enough anti freeze properties.

Check Radiator Hoses and Belts

- Thoroughly check your radiator hoses for cracks and signs of fatigue.
- Ensure the hose clamps are tight and there are no leaks.
- Likewise the fan, alternator, a/c and any other belts your vehicle may use should be checked for cracks, fraying at the edges and signs of fatigue.
- You may also need to check the tension of the belts.
- If the belts are slipping, usually identified by a high pitch squealing coming from the engine especially while it's cold, they will need to be tightened.
- If the belts have stretched to the point they cannot be tightened much further they will need immediate replacement.
- Any Hoses or belts that are looking a bit tired should be checked by a mechanic and replaced, especially if you are about to head off on a remote area adventure.
- Always carry a spare set of belts and hoses for your vehicle when heading into remote area's

Check the lights

- Make sure all your lights are working correctly and that you have spare globes.
- Even your interior light can come in very handy so make sure its working!

Check the Fuses

- Whilst you should notice if a fuse is blown by the failure of a particular part of the vehicle, its a good idea to check the fuse boxes to make sure they are clean and free of corrosion.
- Applying a silicone spray or water disperser can be a good idea to keep the moisture out of your electrics.
- Always carry a large range of fuses specific for your vehicle.



Check the Battery

- Your battery should be a clean and in good condition, starting your vehicle each morning easily.
- Have your battery tested and checked by a professional before heading away.
- A mechanic will also be able to test you alternator to make sure it is working correctly as well.

Check Tyres

- Of course you should have a good set of tyres that are the correct tread pattern for the type of driving you will be doing.
- Not only should your tyres be in good condition but they need to be set at the right pressure.
- Talk to your mechanic about what pressures you will need for the areas you are going and check out [Essential Tyre Pressure Tips for 4WDs](#) for some more handy tips.
- Tyre pressures may vary depending on where you are going so it's a good idea to check your tyres daily.
- Also check your tyres daily for any punctures that may be embedded in the tyre or any damage the tyres may have sustained, especially from heavy off road use.

Don't Over-Load

- Lastly, **do NOT** over load your vehicle or exceed your vehicles GVM rating.
- Be careful how much weight your roof racks are carrying as your roof will have a weight rating as well.
- Over loaded vehicles and trailers that are top heavy can be very dangerous and difficult to control so make sure you pack carefully and spread the load evenly throughout the car.

Keep Tools Handy

Always carry a good set of tools, and spare parts for your vehicle and remember, If you look after your vehicle, it will look after you!

Don't Speed

- Above all keep your speed down on the trip!
- You will get better fuel economy by driving under 100km/h and will lessen the risk of



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damage off road.

- You're on holidays after all so slow down and enjoy yourself!

As I said above, these are not the only things than need to be checked and I cannot recommend highly enough the importance of seeing a qualified mechanic to have your vehicle inspected before your trip. Don't be afraid to talk to your mechanic about what things to look for and check whilst your away and ask about anything that may be specific to your vehicle.

If you have any further mechanical advice to offer when checking your vehicles, we would love to hear from you so feel free to make a comment below!