

STEP BY STEP TO WINTER SAFETY ...

Ice, unlike snow, is not always easy to see. The signs are an eerie silence, and light steering. If this happens, allow **ten times** longer to stop.

Snow can be deceptive. Often your tyres will have more grip on newly fallen snow than on slushy snow. Whatever kind of snow you are driving on you must remember that the car is more likely to go sideways than is. Gently testing your brakes from time-to-time will give you a feel for the surface conditions and available grip.



It is often said that slowing through the gears is better in poor conditions, however, engine braking can momentarily lock the wheels in the same way that normal braking can. I would recommend normal slowing techniques but with feather light use of the controls. Anti-lock brakes offer an advantage, but do not increase the available grip - they won't always prevent skidding on ice!

Signs and markings will be hidden in snow. You may know the roads and be aware of who has priority, but does the other driver?

If you have to turn your car around for any reason, keep the driving wheels on the firmest surface. Be aware of the differences between front and rear wheel drive in this respect - know your car.



Other drivers may not know as much as you think you know about winter driving techniques. Give them lots of space!

Finally, when making long journeys in poor weather conditions take a break more often than you normally would. The extra concentration needed will make you tired more quickly. Not only do you want to arrive alive, you also want to arrive in a fit mental state for business or pleasure ...

Start long journeys with a check on the weather conditions and forecasts. In high, or exposed areas (such as crossing mountains or wide plains) roads can become impassable very, very quickly.

WINTER EMERGENCIES

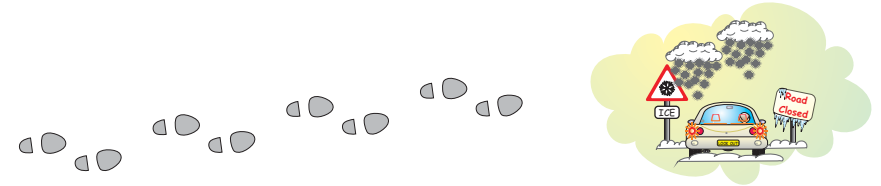
You can prevent a lot of frustration (and stay alive) by anticipating winter problems and having the equipment to deal with them. Full preparation may leave you feeling that you are driving around with a boot full of 'junk' but it will be well worth it if disaster strikes.

❄️ Keep some spare clothing in the car. A warm dry coat, sleeping bag or blankets can be life savers. Heavy boots can slip off the pedals with disastrous results. A spare pair of shoes can keep your 'no claims bonus' intact.

❄️ Jump leads (read the instructions carefully), snow chains, sacking (to put under the wheels, a shovel, a torch, a tow-rope, de-icer, a brush (to clear snow off a standing vehicle), a reflective triangle. Something to eat and drink (not alcohol, this makes you lose body heat more quickly). If you are on medication, take your tablets, medicine, etc., with you. All of these things are useful, especially if you are making out-of-town journeys. I remember reading of a case where a motorist was rescued from a drift after firing a marine rescue flare into the air. Carry anything that you think might help you in an emergency.

❄️ If you get stuck in a drift (out of town) stay in your car. Many people have died trying to reach a farmhouse or hotel. Keep the engine running for warmth but make sure that the exhaust fumes can escape freely (clear the snow from the exhaust pipe) and that they don't leak into the car. It's well worth while keeping your fuel tank topped up in winter to cover this eventuality.

❄️ Allow more time for your journey. You will need time to clean snow and ice off the car (remember, as well as being extremely dangerous, it is an offence to drive with a frosted up windscreen). You are more likely to meet traffic hold-ups in poor weather. Allowing extra time will remove the need (or perceived need) to rush.



PREPARING YOUR VEHICLE FOR WINTER



- COOLING SYSTEM:** Check the strength of your anti-freeze at the start of the winter. How are your hoses? If your car is more than a couple of years old check for perished hoses and minor leaks.
- IGNITION SYSTEM:** Electronic ignition is now fitted to many vehicles, however, damp can still cause problems. Make sure that all ignition circuit contacts are clean and spray the system with an ignition sealer (moisture repellent). Check that your battery is topped up and healthy and be kind in winter by minimising the load placed on it. Three simple ways to do this are: Avoid over use the starter motor, short bursts with long pauses between; Switch off all auxiliary equipment before starting the car; Switch of the screen de-misters when the windows are clear.
- AIR INTAKE:** Check to see if your air intake has a winter position, if so, make the appropriate adjustment. (Is the air filter clean?)
- LIGHTS:** You should carry a spare set of light bulbs all year round, however, this is probably more important in winter when your lights are getting extra use. Make sure that you have wash leathers and/or rags to keep your lights clean in the winter and check to ensure that they are clear and clean as often as possible.
- BRAKES:** It may seem obvious to state that brakes should be in good order, however, your wheels will lock earlier on ice than in other situations and so even the slightest problems can cause major skids in winter.
- TYRES:** Trying to squeeze the last five-hundred miles out of a set of tyres can be counter-productive in winter. You want as much grip as possible when the snow comes (at least 3mm of tread).
- WINDSCREEN WASHERS:** These are less likely to freeze up if the system is clean. Keep a supply of screen-wash additive in the car, this prevents the washer-bottle contents from freezing. Don't use engine anti-freeze in screen washers, apart from smearing your screen it may well strip your paintwork!
- WIPER BLADES:** These will have to work harder in winter so make sure that they are in good condition.



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ADVICE FOR WINTER MOTORING

WINTER DRIVING TECHNIQUE

When moving off in snow and ice use the highest gear possible - this will usually be second. If you encounter wheel-spin, ease off the gas, otherwise you will simply 'polish' the snow and ice, making it more slippery. 'Rock' the car back and forth to get it moving (clutch up and down).

Sacks under the rear wheels can help the tyres to grip. If you tie them to the 'tow ring' you can pull them along, that way you don't lose them! Once you are moving, keep your speed down and use the highest practical gear. Gentle use of all controls is essential. Although we all consider ourselves to be expert, smooth drivers, it is not always the case. Spend some time on an icy car park or skid pan to improve your finesse (Be careful not to upset the local council or police though).



Climbing hills can pose particular problems on slippery roads. Always leave plenty of space between yourself and the car ahead before starting your ascent. Stop and wait for a clear road if necessary, otherwise you may end up being stuck (literally) behind less skillful drivers. For short hills you may consider reversing up in front-wheel-drive vehicles - this way the driving wheels will carry more weight and have more grip. Zig-zagging can also help your wheels to grip.

Use low gears to help hold you back when descending slippery hills. Select the gear as early as possible. Try to avoid using the brakes or changing gear while descending.

It's very easy to be lulled into a false sense of security when sitting in a warm car. Remember that it's freezing out there and so there are likely to be icy patches! Watch out on roads with an adverse camber, water can run across and freeze leaving a skating rink surface. Places where the winter sun never reaches, for example, under trees and in hollows, can also be icy. Overpasses and bridges are also prone to freezing conditions as cool air passes beneath them.

