

Car Fluids CHECKLIST

DOWNLOADABLE CHECKLIST

A simple, practical guide to help you keep on top of your vehicles fluids and avoid costly repairs.

This checklist is designed to be used alongside regular servicing, before long journeys, or whenever you're unsure when your car's fluids were last checked or changed. Work through each section and note anything you're unsure about. Check with your Mechanic and vehicle manufacturer guidelines for up to date intervals.

Important: Seek professional advice before topping up or changing any fluids.

Engine Oil:

- Do I know when the engine oil was last changed?
- Is the oil level between the minimum and maximum marks?
- Does the oil look clean (amber or light brown), not thick, black, milky, glittery (metal particles) or gritty?
- Does the engine sound smooth when running?
- Is the correct oil specification being used for my vehicle?

Typical Interval: 10,000 miles or 12 months whichever comes first depending on vehicle and oil type.

Brake Fluid:

- Do the brakes feel firm and consistent when pressed?
- Has the brake fluid been changed within the last two years?
- Does the fluid in the reservoir look clear rather than dark or cloudy?
- Have I noticed any warning lights or braking changes?

Typical Interval: Every 2 years, regardless of mileage.

Power Steering Fluid (If Fitted):

- Does the steering feel light and consistent?
- Are there any groaning or whining noises when turning?
- Does the fluid look clean and not dark or contaminated?
- Has the fluid ever been changed?

Typical Interval: Around 60,000–80,000 miles where specified.

Note: Some vehicles use electric power steering and do not have this fluid.

Windscreen Washer Fluid:

- Is the washer fluid topped up?
- Are the jets spraying properly?
- Is winter-rated washer fluid being used in cold weather?
- Is visibility clear in poor conditions?

Typical Interval: Always depends on use, therefore as required.

Transmission Fluid (Manual or Automatic):

- Has the transmission fluid ever been changed?
- Does the vehicle change gear smoothly without hesitation or jolting?
- Are there any warning messages or unusual noises when driving?
- Has the vehicle described as 'sealed for life' without further explanation?

Typical Interval: 30,000 - 60,000 miles (manual and automatic vary).

Engine Coolant (Antifreeze):

- Is the coolant level between the minimum and maximum marks?
- Do I know which coolant specification my car requires?
- Has the coolant been changed within the last 4-5 years?
- Has the engine ever overheated or lost coolant?
- Has coolant ever been topped up with a different type?

Typical Interval: Every 4–5 years for most modern UK vehicles.

Differential and Transfer Box Oils:

- Has the differential or transfer box oil ever been changed?
- Do I tow, drive off-road, or use a 4x4 regularly?
- Are there any whining or rumbling noises?
- Is the vehicle approaching higher mileage?

Typical Interval: 60,000–120,000 miles depending on use.

Before Booking a Service:

- Do I have a clear service history?
- Do I know which fluids are due by time, not mileage?
- Am I confident the correct specifications will be used?
- Will I be contacted before any additional work is carried out?

! Common warning signs not to ignore

- Burnt smells from oil or transmission
- Spongy or inconsistent brake pedal
- Dashboard warning lights or messages
- Dark, milky or cloudy fluids
- Unusual noises from steering or drivetrain
- Drop in performance or refinement

Final Note

Fluid maintenance is one of the simplest ways to protect performance, safety and long-term reliability. Keeping records and asking the right questions helps you stay in control and avoid unnecessary repairs.

If you're unsure about any fluid checks or service intervals, professional advice can give clarity and peace of mind before small issues turn into expensive ones. **Please note:** Always check manufacture guidelines as requirements may differ.