

GUIDANCE FOR DRIVING IN SNOW

First and foremost – Listen to the advice given. If the advice is “Don’t drive unless essential”, then “**Don’t drive unless essential.**”

If you must drive it is important you are suitably prepared:

- Allow plenty of extra time for your journey
- If necessary plan an alternative route
- Remember - you will change what you wear and put on your feet – most of us do not have the luxury of doing this with our cars – Do not make unreasonable demands on your car - you cannot expect the car to drive the same in adverse weather
- Ensure you clear all windows (inside and out), mirrors, headlights and taillights (it is no use using lights/indicators if they cannot be seen by others)
- Dress/carry warm clothing – gloves, hat, boots etc
- Carry a blanket, hot flask and something to eat
- Carry a shovel, grit/salt, an old piece of carpet to put under the tyres should you get stuck
- Carry an ice scraper/de-icer
- Carry a FULLY CHARGED mobile phone
- If possible carry a first aid kit
- Ensure your spare tyre is inflated to the max pressure for your car and you have the necessary tools to change a wheel should you need to
- Ensure tyres are correctly inflated in accordance with those set out in the car handbook. Do NOT deflate tyres for better grip – this can have an adverse affect and could lead to loss of control
- Ensure tyres have sufficient tread depth – 1.6mm is the legal minimum, however below 3mm you really start to lose grip in wet and adverse weather
- If you are lucky enough – fit winter tyres – these are made of softer rubber and have a different tread/pattern. These perform better in all conditions below 7°C
- Check you have enough fuel for the journey – allow more than you need for delays or getting stuck.
- Check all the levels under the bonnet – do not rely on electronic systems for this. Check Oil, Coolant, Brake Fluid and keep washer fluid topped up (carry extra in the boot just in case)
- Don’t operate wipers on a frozen windscreen - you can damage the motor and the rubber wiper blades
- Use appropriate lighting – usually dipped headlights. If visibility is seriously reduced (below 100 metres) use front and rear fog lights – remember to switch these off when conditions improve

- Increase your following distance – in good weather a minimum gap of 2 seconds is required. This is doubled to 4 seconds in wet weather and stopping distances can be up to ten times the normal in snow and ice. Extend your following distance further if the vehicle behind you is not leaving sufficient space
- Virgin snow provides better grip but can mask hidden problems such as potholes or ice
- The majority of skids occur as a result of driver error and are avoidable. REMEMBER: Skid avoidance is the best approach so that you do not have to try to recover from/control a skid
- Avoid any sudden acceleration, harsh braking or steering as these can lead to a loss of control
- Avoid steering and braking at the same time
- Use engine braking (off gas) but remember this will take you longer to stop so allow more space
- ABS (anti-lock brakes) can actually be counter productive in snow and ice
- Do not spin your wheels – you are likely to dig yourself in deeper
- Be careful if one wheel grips and the other does not as this can cause the car to move sideways
- If you are struggling to move off in snow – try starting in 2nd gear – NO GAS – just very gentle and slowly with the clutch – add a little gas as the car starts to move and continue very slowly with the clutch to allow the wheels to slowly turn and reduce the risk of a stall
- If you become stuck, you may need to dig yourself out and/or use grit to help. If you have an old piece of carpet this can be used to place under the tyres
- If you do skid, steer into the skid – e.g. if the rear of the car skids to the right, steer right to help recover the skid
- Remember, however safe you are, you are still at the mercy of other drivers. Anticipate and allow for other drivers' mistakes

Pre-driver checks:

Fuel
Lights
Oil
Water
Electrics
Rubber
Self

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