

How to... store your classic car

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There are several reasons why you might be thinking about storing your car. Maybe winter is approaching. You could carry on using it as normal or store it so you're not tempted to use it during the season of salted roads and wet weather. Whichever you choose, there's preparation to be done. Here, we'll cover the stages you need to follow to ensure you store your cherished classic correctly and safely.

It might seem an easy thing to garage your car, however significant deterioration can occur if you don't prepare your vehicle properly. A car's parts are less likely to wear out when it's in storage, but they'll sit in the same position and the lack of operating warmth means that moisture doesn't evaporate in storage.

Dampness from the atmosphere attaches itself to microscopic dirt particles so, to stop the body from spoiling, your car will need to be perfectly polished. Engine internals can suffer from acidic degradation to exposed surfaces out of oil, plus tyres can suffer from flat-spotting and damage as the rubber dries out. Rotate transmissions and diffs by hand to cover all internals with gear oil before driving the car again.

STEP 1: HANDBRAKE

Leave the handbrake off to stop shoes sticking against the drum.

On cars with disc brakes, leaving the handbrake off reduces pad transference, where the material embeds into the disc to create hard spots that cause a vibrating pedal. It also avoids keeping the cable under tension for long periods.



STEP 2: ENGINE



Change the oil and filter before you store the car, to keep contaminants to a minimum in the crankcase.

Check coolant strength with a cheap floating-ball tester and top up with antifreeze if necessary (refer to handbook for correct concentration). Run the engine until hot to circulate it evenly.

STEP 3: TYRES

Avoid flat-spotting by inflating the tyres to their maximum pressure (written on the sidewall). It's about 50psi for radials. Crossplies run harder, so lift them a few psi from normal.

Use rubber conditioner to moisturise the tyres, and let them down to running pressure before recommissioning the car.



STEP 4: BRAKES



To keep the caliper pistons in top condition, siphon off excess fluid from the master cylinder reservoir. Press each piston back into the caliper, then top up the reservoir with fresh fluid.

Put a note on the dash reminding yourself to 'pump out' the brakes and replenish the fluid before using the car again.

STEP 5: BATTERY

Batteries are designed for daily use and deposits can occur in storage that limit their efficiency.

Use a conditioner that is permanently plugged into the mains to ensure your cell stays in peak condition. If you garage your car in a lock-up, take the battery home and put it on one of these cycling chargers.



STEP 6: CLUTCH



Avoid a stuck clutch by depressing the pedal to relieve pressure on the driven plate. This puts the clutch mechanism under constant pressure, so release it every week.

Older clutch plates won't tend to stick but new ones will – until they develop a shiny friction surface – so only do this if your clutch is recent.

STEP 7: CAR COVERS

Even breathable covers can retain moisture against paintwork much longer than a car takes to dry naturally, but they're a must if you want to prevent water entering the cabin.

Covers can chafe paint so they work best in sheltered areas. Ideally fit a tailored type, or use rope/bungees to keep it tight.



STEP 8: BRIGHTWORK



After buffing your brightwork with the least aggressive metal polish you can get away with, smear a very thin coat of Vaseline or light grease over it.

A rag soaked in thinners or turps substitute will shift it ready for the new season, and you'll have prevented the plating from tarnishing.

Chrome wire wheels

Store clean and protect with a light spray of oil or Furniture polish.