Maintenance Schedule Cheat Sheet

Your owner's manual always wins - these are typical ranges a Master Tech uses. If you tow, haul, idle a lot, drive short trips, or live where it's dusty or very cold/hot, use the **severe service** schedule.

Every fill-up / monthly

- Tire pressure (door-sticker number, tires cold) - pressure drops about 1 psi for every 10°F
- Look for leaks under the car, check lights and wipers
- Oil level on the dipstick (especially on high-mileage or turbo engines)

Mileage-based maintenance

Item	Typical interval	Notes
Engine oil + filter	Oil-life monitor, or 5,000-10,000 mi synthetic	Short trips, towing, dust or a turbo = change sooner. At least once a year.
Tire rotation	Every 5,000-7,500 mi (about every oil change)	Even wear = tires last longer. AWD vehicles especially.
Alignment check	Once a year, with new tires, or after a big pothole/curb hit	Pulling, crooked wheel, or inside-edge tire wear = check now.
Brake inspection	Every tire rotation	Pads, rotors, hoses. Squeal/grind = don't wait.
Engine air filter	15,000-30,000 mi	Sooner on gravel/dusty roads.
Cabin air filter	15,000-25,000 mi or yearly	Musty A/C smell or weak airflow.
Brake fluid	Every 2-3 years	It absorbs water over time. Test strips are cheap.
Coolant	Long-life: often first change at 100k-150k mi, then per manual	Test protection level before winter.
Spark plugs	Iridium/platinum: about 60k-100k mi	Copper plugs much sooner.
Transmission fluid	Per manual - see the DG317 Transmission Guide	Severe service: often 30k-60k mi.
Differential / transfer case	30k-60k mi if towing or 4x4 use	Check the manual for the exact gear oil.
Serpentine belt	Inspect at 60k, replace around 90k-100k or when cracked	Squeal on cold starts is a clue.
Timing belt (if equipped)	Usually 60k-105k mi - CHECK THE MANUAL	On many engines a broken belt destroys the engine. Replace the water pump at the same time.
Battery	Test yearly after 3 years old	Free test at most parts stores. Cold kills weak batteries first.
Wiper blades	Every 6-12 months	Winter blades for snow country.

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Fuel system + "upper engine" cleaning - what actually helps

- **Use Top Tier gasoline** when you can - more detergent, fewer deposits. Cheapest prevention there is.
- **Fuel injector cleaner:** a bottle with **PEA (polyetheramine)** in a full tank every few thousand miles, or around each oil change, helps keep injectors and combustion chambers clean. More is not better - follow the bottle.
- **Direct-injection (GDI) engines** - most newer engines - spray fuel straight into the cylinder, so fuel additives *can't* wash the intake valves. Carbon builds up on the valves over time.
- **GDI carbon cleaning** (induction service or walnut blasting) is worth it when you have symptoms: rough idle, cold-start misfires, lost power - often somewhere past 50k-80k miles. Not needed on a schedule if it runs perfectly.
- **Throttle body cleaning** fixes many rough/surging idles - cheap and quick.
- Skip "engine flush" upsells on a healthy, regularly serviced engine.

Seasonal checklist

Before winter	Before summer
Battery test, coolant protection level, winter wipers + -20°F washer fluid, tire tread (or winter tires), emergency kit in the trunk	A/C performance, coolant level + hoses, tire pressure (goes up in heat), wiper blades after winter, wash the salt off the underbody

Keep a log

Write down the date, mileage and what was done every time - or keep your receipts in one folder. A complete service history makes warranty claims easier and adds real money when you sell.

Not sure what your car needs next? Ask A Mechanic on the DETAILGUY317 Garage site - free.