

## For roadside emergencies and repairs:

### Tire changing supplies

The number one item on our list is actually a collection of items - a spare tire, tire iron, lug wrench, tire jack and some WD-40. If you've got these essentials on hand, then you've got everything you need to change a tire should one go flat.

### Tire Sealant

A shot of tire sealant like Fix-A-Flat or Slime can patch a leaky tire on the fly. This 16 oz. bottle of [Slime Tubeless Automotive Tire Sealant](#) is \$7.99 at [Amazon](#), the best value we found online.

### Jumper cables

A dead battery can take you by surprise, so don't rely on a good Samaritan to supply jumper cables. We found a set of [Everstart 10-Gauge Booster Cables](#) for \$14.67 shipped or \$8.68 with in-store pickup at [Walmart](#), a price low for this set either way.

### Owner's manual

You know, that book that came with your car that you never looked at? Keep it in your glove compartment. You never know when it might come in handy. Can't find yours? Most are available online for free. [Edmunds.com](#) has a great list of shortcuts to help you out.

### Tire pressure gauge

So your tire needs air. Great! You pull up to the air compressor at your favorite gas station, and... wait, how do you know when you've added enough air? Did you add too much? How lucky that you've stashed a tire pressure gauge in your trunk. While there are plenty of digital options on the market, we opted for this ultra-basic [Bell Automotive Standard Pencil Tire Gauge](#) for \$4.49 at Amazon. Not only does it cost less than the digital models, it also doesn't have a battery that might turn out to be dead someday when you need it.

### Duct tape

Great for everything from temporary auto repairs to roadside first aid, duct tape is a no-brainer. AskPatty.com gives us [38 ways you can use duct tape to fix your car](#). Seriously, duct tape is the rock star of your care emergency kit.

### Gas can

Sure, you can walk to the nearest gas station when you run out of gas, but then how do you get the gas back to your car? It's probably not wise to keep a full gas can, though, given that it's a highly flammable spill risk, and besides, you don't want to fumigate your trunk. If you don't have room for a gas can, though, don't fret too much. You can buy one at the gas station too.

### **Windshield wiper fluid**

I have two terrifying words for you: Winter Splashback. I can say with authority that there is nothing worse than driving across Ohio in a snowstorm with passing semi trucks constantly kicking road slush up onto your windshield, and then running out of wiper fluid. Been there, done that.

### **A pair of work gloves**

Save your hands while you're wrestling with lugnuts, tire irons, hot engine parts, and anything else you're better off not touching with bare hands. This pair of [G & F Heavy Leather Palm Gloves](#) is \$5.60 with free shipping at Amazon.

### **Fire extinguisher**

Heaven forbid your engine ever catches fire, or a campfire jumps its boundaries. But if you're thinking of the giant, heavy wall-mounted fire extinguishers you see in schools and corporate stairwells, you'll be pleased to know there are much smaller, more portable options on the market. We found a [16-oz. can of MAX Professional Fire Gone Portable Extinguisher](#) for \$10.33 at Amazon, which looks more like a can of bug spray than a fire stopping tool.

## **For health and safety while stranded:**

### **First aid kit**

Taking a leisurely drive through a popular park one day with a friend, a skateboarder wiped out pretty badly, right in front of my car. (No, I didn't hit her.) After slamming on the brakes, we jumped out to see if she was okay. She'd dislocated and possibly broken her shoulder and was pretty scraped up. We cleaned her up as best we could with my first aid kit before driving her back up the hill where her friends and their car were waiting, and ordered one of her friends to take her to an ER. Moral of the story: you never know when you're going to need a first aid kit. The [AAA 53-Piece Tune Up First Aid Kit](#) is an affordable option for \$7.95 at Amazon.

### **Flashlight or mini-lantern**

Ever tried to change a tire in the dark? Or lose your wedding ring under the seat? Your flashlight will save the day. Because batteries can lose their juice over time, we recommend getting a crank-style light that doesn't need them, like this [Energizer Weatheready 3-LED Carabineer Rechargeable Crank Light](#) for \$14.47 at Amazon.

### **Multi-tool**

You never know what tool you're going to need. A multi-tool covers your bases on the most common stuff and is loads more space-efficient than a bulky toolbox. Leatherman is the gold standard, but there are plenty of more affordable options on the market, including the [Swiss+Tech Micro-Max 19-in-1 Key Ring Multi-Function Pocket Tool](#) for \$8.54 at Amazon.

### **Emergency food**

We can't all get lost in the wilderness and survive two weeks on Girl Scout cookies. But if you might be traveling off the beaten path, it's a good idea to keep a few non-perishable, melt-proof, calorie

dense food items in the car, like energy bars, granola bars, dried fruit or MREs. I even found one list that included peanut butter, which sounds great in theory but horrible in execution without utensils and water to wash it down.

### **Water bottles**

A couple of bottles of water can literally save your life when you're stranded and facing dehydration. Make sure the bottles are sturdy enough to withstand both extreme heat and freezing conditions.

### **Weather radio**

There's nothing but static on the car radio, your beloved iPhone is getting no service, and those clouds over there on the horizon look like they might be a thing. Time to fire up your weather radio to see what NOAA has to say about it. Chances are pretty good that most of the U.S. would never need when it's so easy to pull up the current weather radar map on a 4G connection these days, but in the wilderness, where fancy tech often means nothing, a weather radio can be a life saver.

### **Reflective triangles**

You're already having a bad day, so make sure that night drivers can see you when you're pulled off onto the shoulder to help prevent it from getting any worse.

### **Printed maps**

Thick cloud cover, tree foliage, tall buildings and mountains all can block a GPS signal, and your battery isn't going to last forever. Throw a [Rand McNally Road Atlas](#) in the back seat just in case technology fails you.

### **Mylar blanket**

Use it to keep warm in cold weather. Fashion it into a sun shade when it's hot. Catch rain for a water supply. Use the reflective surface to dry wet clothes faster. There are plenty of uses for a space blanket.

### **Pail/bucket**

Collecting rain water. Temporary garbage can. Spontaneous sand castles. Corraling all of the little things on this list. A pail or bucket is an indispensable car item.

## **Especially in the winter:**

### **Snow shovel**

I regret that I no longer have room for my snow shovel in my tiny car, but when I lived in Colorado I had to dig myself out of my parking spot at the office more than once. It would have done me no good if I'd left it at home in the garage.

### **An extra winter coat**

You'll be glad you have it when a fast weather change catches you off guard, or you were only planning on dashing 50 feet from the car to the front door, or you didn't expect it to be below freezing at the top of Mt. Evans when it was mid-70s in the city. Been there, done that. All of that.

### **A traction helper**

The debate over whether you should use a carpet remnant, kitty litter or sand seems to be way more heated than it needs to be, but whatever works for you, keep it handy. Personally, I've used kitty litter to get out of my ice-dammed parking spot more than once. The good news is that you can go cheap with the kitty litter since there's no cat to offend, though I recommend a brand in a plastic jug over a box or bag unless you want random kitty litter strewn throughout your trunk.

### **Ice scraper and snow brush**

Another one for the northerners who suffer through snowy winters. Where are you going with frost covered windows? Nowhere in a hurry, that's for sure. Also, don't forget to brush the snow off your car's roof. You look pretty silly driving around with a foot of snow on your roof when the rest of your car is clean, the wind shears off the top layers and makes it harder for the driver behind you to see, and eventually your car warms up enough that it all avalanches onto your windshield in one giant wet sploosh, and then you have snow on your hood again and trapped under your windshield wipers. Do everyone in a 10 mile radius a favor and **just brush it off already**.

### **Red bandanna**

If your car has an exterior antenna, you can tie something brightly colored like a red bandanna to it when the snow is piling up fast to keep your car visible to passing motorists, snow plows, etc. This is a good practice both when you're stranded in the middle of nowhere or when you're just parking on the street during Chicago's next Snowmageddon. Be honest, Chicago folks, how many times has the snow bank on your street melted to reveal a car underneath that you had no idea was there? Too many times to count. Additionally, a bandanna can cover your nose and mouth during dust storms, or you can use it as a head cover, a napkin, a tourniquet, etc.

### **A barbecue lighter, an empty can, and tea light candles**

I'm lumping these items into a single line because they all depend on each other. In the winter, stranded in your car with no heat, drop three tea light candles into a tin coffee can to help stay warm. Set it on a stable, level, heat-resistant surface. Enjoy about 4 hours of radiant heat. You can buy a bag of **50 unscented tea lights** for \$8.22 at Amazon.

### **Comfortable walking shoes**

I'm looking at you, ladies who like to drive in stilettos. Throw that old scuffed up pair of TOMS you were going to throw away into your car trunk instead, just in case you have to hike somewhere for help.

## **Because it just makes life easier:**

### **A car-adapted phone charger**

Keeping a charger in my car is one of the best decisions I've ever made. My phone is always

plugged in while I drive, ensuring that I have a fully charged battery whenever I arrive at my destination, even if I ran the GPS and Pandora the whole way.

### **Paper towels**

Quick cleanup options are a good thing. Wipe bugs off of windshields, grape jelly off of little faces and fingers - you know, all the usual stuff.

### **Tissues**

Keep a travel pack in your glove box. Your mom will be proud of you.

### **Notebook and pen**

Jot down directions when you're lost. Or your contact and insurance info after a minor fender bender. Or the name of that amazing roadside BBQ dive you stumbled into. Or the license plate number of the guy who cut you off and went all road rage on you.

### **Umbrella**

More versatile than staying dry while running from the car to your office door, an umbrella also makes a handy sun shade.

### **A roll of quarters**

For unexpected tolls, parking meters, etc.

### **Reusable tote bags**

Impromptu grocery store trips are the obvious reason here, but really, what would you NOT use these for?

### **Plastic grocery bags**

Yes, these too. While the reusable totes are great for porting your stuff, you wouldn't want a carsick passenger to puke into one of them. Also great for cleaning out the car on the go - just fill up the bag and toss it in a dumpster. Or stashing muddy shoes you don't want mucking up your floor mats.

### **Blanket**

I've gotten more mileage out of an old comforter that I stashed in the car than anything else on this list. It's warm on cool nights. It's a great picnic blanket, It covers the back seat when I have wet and muddy passengers or pets in tow. The ideal car blanket is one you've got buried in a closet somewhere, but if you need to pick something up, you can usually score a deal at Kmart or on Amazon.