# Spare moment...

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Out of sight and often out of mind, a spare wheel and tyre can get you home so it’s worth spending a little time and effort on checking

## condition and tyre inflation level!

(Photograph and all words by, and copyright, Kim Henson).

When did you last see your car's spare wheel? (That's assuming that your car has one; many modern vehicles lack a spare, but instead may have an 'emergency tyre inflation kit' – in which case inspect this from time to time).

Chances are that if your vehicle does have a spare wheel and tyre, it may be hidden away beneath the car or within a well in the boot floor, and may not be thought about until a puncture occurs and suddenly the spare's condition becomes very important!

With my various vehicles, old and new, I try to include spare wheel/tyre inspections as part of my regular maintenance programme. Yes, it can take a few minutes, but worth it for the peace of mind of knowing that if needed, the spare will easily be removed from its location and will be ready for use at any time.

The first step is to make sure that any retainer screws are not seized (which they may be if untouched for a long time). In this case apply a little penetrating fluid, and allow to soak into the threads before gently easing the retainer to and fro.

Once the retainer has been unscrewed/removed, take out the wheel and tyre and check for any deterioration, including corrosion of the wheel itself, and damage to the tyre. Check also the tyre's tread depth and age – you could find yourself in all sorts of trouble if you ever have to use the spare and find that it's illegal and dangerous!

If you have recently acquired a vehicle and it has a spare wheel and tyre, make a point of checking condition as above; you may have a nasty shock and find that the tyre is deflated and in any case unfit for the road due to structural defects/deterioration.

If the tyre is okay, re-inflate it to the required pressure setting (given in the vehicle's handbook or typically on a door pillar label). I tend to inflate the spare to a pressure very

slightly above the recommended figure, to allow for any ‘seepage’ of pressure over time. I also carry a pressure gauge and footpump in the car, not least so that if the spare ever has to be used, I can re-check and if necessary adjust the pressure before fitting it.

Always make sure that all the tools required for a wheel change are present, correct and in good condition. This includes the jack; if necessary, lubricate the operating threads and work the jack up and down a few times, wiping off excess lubricant (I use a few drops of engine oil). Ensure too that the car’s jacking points are sound…

Last but not least, apply a little copper-based anti-seize compound to the threads of the spare wheel retainer; this will help to prevent seizure in the long term.