Common car problems can happen to millions of people every day. Knowing how to prevent them or what your best options are to fix them is your best defense.

**13 Common Car Problems You Do Not Want To Ignore**

If you drive your car a lot, you’re going to have common car problems, in fact, even if you let a car sit for a long time with no maintenance, your car will still have some problems. A lot of car owners think that their [cars are indestructible](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/2019/12/), but this couldn’t be further from the truth.

Recognizing common car problems and understanding how serious they are and how fast you need to get them to the dealership or repair shop or even do some DIY work on them can be the difference between how long it takes to get fixed and how much money it will cost you.

Here are 13 common car problems you might experience where getting them fixed sooner than later can save you a lot of headaches.

## **Slow Crank When Starting Your Car**

The battery is a very common component in your car that will go bad, no questions about it, it’s going to go bad. If you don’t have your battery tested and replaced if needed, you will end up stranded, usually on a brutally cold day, because just like most of us, batteries hate cold days too.

A slow crank could be contributed to other problems as well like your starter, alternator, and sometimes worn out wiring.

The good news is**,** almost every big parts store chain in America has a test tool to test if your battery is functioning properly or if it needs to be changed. The same tool will also be able to tell you if your alternator and or started is causing starting problems. What makes this even easier for you, giving you no excuse not to go and find out what the problem is, an employee will come out to your car and do it for free.

## **Squealing/Grinding or Vibrations When You Hit The Brakes**

Your brakes get a workout every time you drive, and that means they are going to wear out over time. When your brake pads wear down, they need to be changed. All brake pads have a built-in metal piece called a wear indicator that makes contact with the rotor when the pads need to be replaced. When the wear indicator makes contact with the rotor it will squeal or grind or both.

If it seems like your brakes are squealing/grinding all the time, this means your brake pads are dangerously worn out and you need to get them replaced right away. You may not have to have your rotors changed every time your brake pads get replaced, but if you wait too long to have your pads serviced, you might mess up your rotors and cost yourself more money.

If you feel a serious vibration when you hit the brakes, this means your brake rotors are most likely warped. When your rotors are wrapped to a point where it shakes your car till it feels like it’s falling apart, they probably can’t be maintenanced and will need to be replaced. Any parts store can take a simple visual inspection and let you know if they can refresh them or if they are garbage.

## **Mushy Brake Pedal**

A mushy brake pedal can be an easy fix or an expensive fix. Your brake master cylinder is the heart of your brake system and it uses hydraulic fluid ran through brake lines to all four brake assemblies to force them to clamp down on the rotor or shoes. If there is any air in those brake lines, this will cause a mushy or spongy brake pedal. The good news is this can be a quick, easy, inexpensive fix with a “brake bleed”.

A brake bleed is something you and a buddy can do in your driveway. You just have to locate the bleed screws on the calipers, or on the back of the wheel cylinder for drum brakes. Have your buddy pump up the brakes as much as possible, then you can loosen the screws about halfway. Then your buddy can start pumping again until air and extra fluid comes out. Have your buddy hold down the brake pedal while you tighten the screw back up. Do one wheel at a time and repeat the process until your paddle feels normal again.

Unfortunately, a mushy paddle could be more expensive and more involved to fix. If you think your brakes are leaking then you could have a damaged brake line, a leaking brake cylinder, caliper, or your master cylinder might be going bad. If you notice fresh hydraulic fluid under your vehicle by either wheel then it’s probably a damaged brake line, caliper, or wheel cylinder. If you notice hydraulic fluid under your engine compartment then it’s probably your master cylinder. With the right tools and knowledge, you can probably replace leaking calipers or wheel cylinders on your own, but for brake lines and master cylinders, I would seek out your mechanic.

## **Maintenance Lights Lighting Up Your Dashboard**

It can be annoying and kind of scary when you see maintenance lights pop up on your dashboard. Even worse, sometimes they are very vague not giving you much of an idea of why they are popping up. And it’s true, sometimes they do pop up and there is nothing seriously wrong with your car, but these usually lead you to some basic common car problems that need to be fixed.

A lot of the lights that appear on your dashboard are pretty much common sense lights, but some can be confusing or misleading. The [“Check Engine”](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/5-warning-dashboard-lights-never-to-ignore/) light is one of those lights that could mean a number of things. You could have something as simple as a gas cap that needs to be tightened or something much more serious. If your car seems to be running fine, you don’t have to rush to get it checked right away, but you should keep it in the back of your head.

The only real way to find out why the check engine light is on is by plugging in a code finder like an OBD2 scanner. Any credible dealership or auto shop will have one, or you could rent one or buy one and do it at home. The OBD2 scanner plugs into your car’s computer system and will tell you code that will direct you to the problem. To crack these codes, you can easily find them on the Internet. Now depending on what the problem is will determine if it’s something that you can do on your own or if your car needs to go to the dealership.

In almost all cars, a “Service Engine Soon” light means one of two things: it’s time for your regular scheduled maintenance or that your low on fluids somewhere or something else minor is wrong. If it is indeed time for your regular scheduled maintenance, then by all means go and have it done. If it’s not and you want to see if you can fix it yourself, this could absolutely be feasible.

You can check all of your fluid levels, check your air filter, and make sure there are no airflow restrictions. If you have the tools, you can always pull a spark plug or two to see if they look reasonably clean. You can check and make sure all vacuum hoses are secure. Check for secure battery connections, worn belts, fuses, and whatever else you feel comfortable with. Simple maintenance things like these could shut off the “Service Engine Soon” light.

Most all other dashboard light indicators aren’t so self-explanatory, but your owner’s manual will have a detailed chart telling you what each one means and what has to be done to fix the problem.

## **Transmission Problems**

Yes, [transmission problems](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/the-top-10-most-expensive-car-repairs/) are a very scary phrase to hear, but unfortunately, these common car problems happen. Since these problems are usually extremely expensive and time-consuming it’s not recommended you take on any automatic transmission problem for the first time by yourself. The reason why I say that is, the automatic transmission is so much more complicated than any other component of the vehicle, even if you do have auto repair experience, you probably won’t get your transmission fixed, and even worse, you will probably make your problem bigger.

If you have slow shifts, soft shifts, high revs without going very far or you’re not going anywhere at all, you most likely have a transmission problem. You can always cross your fingers and hope maybe it is just a transmission filter problem. If you can locate the filter and pull it out, check and see if it’s extremely dirty, if it is, replace it and you might get lucky. But if the problem still exists, pray your transmission is under warranty.

**Quick Tip:** If you have no idea about cars and transmissions, bring someone along with you that you trust and knows a little bit about automotive procedures to help make sure you don’t get screwed.

## **Computer (ECU, ECM, PCM) Problems**

With [computer problems](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/top-reasons-your-car-wont-pass-inspection-and-where-to-get-parts-cheap/), there’s bad news and good news. The bad news is there is no real way to fix a car computer, they’re not like your home computer where there are tons of different tricks and procedures to get your bummed-out computer back up in running. The good news is they’re not too expensive and pretty easy to replace.

The biggest problem is making sure it is your computer that needs to be replaced. There is nothing worse than replacing a part only to find your problem still exists. One of the best ways to tell if your computer needs to be replaced is if your car simply isn’t running correctly.

If your car won’t accelerate quickly, or your car boggs or sputters when you accelerate it could be your computer. If your engine has a hard time idling or backfires unexplainably, this could be a computer problem. These could also sound like common spark plug problems or bad gas, but there is a way to check this. When you turn your car keys to the on position, your dashboard should light up with check engine lights and other warning lights, if they don’t come on, it’s probably your computer. Also, when your computer takes a dump, like all electrical issues, it will most likely give off a nasty burnt electrical smell. But the full proof way to tell if your computer is shot or is going to be shot is to hook up a scanner and that will let you know right away.

## **Overheating Problems**

The first thing you should know about these overheating common car problems is “**don’t drive your car until you get it fixed**”. Driving your car when it is overheating will cause you bigger problems that will cost you an absolute fortune, and most likely it will take forever to get those problems fixed.

The first thing you want to do is make sure your engine has cooled and then check the fluid level. The fluid should be filled to the top. If not, get a 50/50 mix of antifreeze and water and top it off. While the cap is off, inspect the cap for rust, corrosion, or other debris that could give it a problem sealing properly. You can either clean the cap or change it, they’re cheap parts you can purchase at all auto parts stores.

Next, check for leaks. Check for leaks on the ground, check for them around the hoses, and check for them around the engine in general. If you see green gunk in the crevices of the engine or engine compartment, coolant is leaking somewhere and this could be why your coolant level is low. Not to worry, this could be an easy fix. A loose hose clamp, a broken hose clamp, or a damaged hose can be a quick and inexpensive DIY fix for someone even if they don’t know much about cars.

If the fluids were low, you want to check and see if your quick fix corrected your problem. So turn your vehicle on and see if your car starts to overheat again. While you’re waiting, make sure when the engine temp starts climbing the fans that blow on to the radiator to kick on. If they don’t, this will be a problem and the motors will have to be replaced.

Another common car problem that can be hard to detect is a broken water pump serpentine belt. The reason why you might not know it is broken is that if it snaps off while you’re driving down the road you’ll lose it and it could look like it never existed. If you can locate the water pump, look and see if it has a belt and it’s on properly. If the water pump doesn’t spin then the water will not flow through the engine causing it to overheat. This is another inexpensive fix and one you can probably do by yourself with a minimum amount of tools.

There is one more step you can take that is inexpensive and possibly a DIY project. Before you start thinking you have bigger problems that a mechanic will have to look at. If you’re up to the challenge, you can change your thermostat. The thermostat is located in the water neck at the front of the engine and is connected to the top radiator hose.

All you have to do is drain the antifreeze from the radiator, then disconnect the top radiator hose from the water neck, and then unbolt the water neck. The thermostat is located in the water neck. Pull it out and see if it is opening and closing easily. If it isn’t, replace it (inexpensive), if it is, you have bigger problems and should probably take it to a mechanic.

**Quick Tip:** You can try to unstick the thermostat and replace it if it is stuck, but chances are it will act up again and you will be forced to take it all apart another day. For the price that it costs for a new one, just change it while it’s disassembled that way you don’t have to worry about it for a long time.

## **Car Vibrates When You Drive**

This happens for a number of reasons. The most common reason is a general maintenance issue. The unfortunate problem is if your car is already vibrating, you might have missed your chance for saving yourself a crapload of money. [Tire rotation](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/what-to-do-with-old-tires-disposal-methods-and-recycling-activities/) is a part of general maintenance and should be done every 5000 miles, or for a good rule of thumb, every time you have your oil changed.

We do take different routes in our cars for different reasons, but for the most part, our daily routines will leave us taking the same route majority of the time. This will start to wear an uneven wear pattern on your tires that will eventually start shaking your car when it’s in motion. When that happens you will probably have to spring for a new set of tires, but with a proper tire rotation schedule, your tires will last you a lot longer.

This is definitely something you can do in your driveway or garage with a floor jack, four-way wrench, and a set of jack stands.

### **Second Set Of Reasons Why Your Car Might Vibrate When You Drive**

If you know your tires are not the source of your car's vibration problem, you might have something more going on. If it feels like the vibration is more in the steering wheel and the vibrating only starts when you hit higher speeds like expressway speeds, your wheels and tires might be out of balance. The good news is this isn’t too expensive or time-consuming to have fixed, but the bad news is that most of us won’t have a tire balancing machine in our garages, but all repair shops and dealerships will.

If the vibrating problems happen at all speeds, then you will probably have a wheel bearing/s problem or some sort of suspension problem. Fixing these problems takes specialized tools, probably tools you won’t find in your toolbox at home. And it should be noted that these types of repairs can be very dangerous for the do-it-yourselfers, so it’s recommended you seek out an accredited technician to take on these kinds of tasks.

## **Flat Tires**

Yes, this happens, and there are many reasons you might end up with a flat. You might hit a nail in the road, run over broken glass in the parking lot, rub the curb with your tire, and the list goes on and on. The best advice here is to always be prepared. Make sure you have a spare tire, a car jack, a four-way wrench, and a jack stand. Having these things handy can save you from making a phone call and waiting on friends or family, a tow truck company, or AAA.

**Note:** Check and see if you have hub caps on your wheels, if you do you might also want to have a flat head screwdriver and a small rubber mallet hammer handy, this will help you get the hubcaps off and back on without breaking them.

## **Power Windows Move Slow Or Not At All**

This is another one of those common car problems that will eventually happen. First, you have to determine what the problem is that you’re having. If the window was working perfectly fine and one day it just stopped, it could be a fuse or the window switch. If you’re lucky it’s one of those problems.

Check your owner’s manual and see what fuse corresponds to the power windows and check to see if it’s blown. If it is, this will fix your problem, if not, then it’s probably the power window switch. All you have to do is make sure you get the correct switch dealer/parts store for your year/make/model. Next, use a small flathead screwdriver and pop the switch out of the door panel, plug the new switch in, and snap it back in place. Be sure not to scratch the surrounding surfaces, or use something that emulates a flathead screwdriver that is plastic to prevent scratching.

If your window still works but is increasingly getting slower, this will be a power window/regulator problem. This is a project you can also do at home, but if you don’t have patience with cars, you might want someone else to do it for you. If you are impatient or aggressive, you could crack, break, or rip a lot of plastic pieces.

To accomplish this task you will need at least a general set of tools. Nothing fancy. An average set of screwdrivers, a set of sockets, a ratchet, possibly some torque drivers or allen wrenches, and industrial-strength tape will do. If you’re smart, before you start, you will want to take a look at a few youtube tutorials to get an idea of some of the tips, tricks, and finesse that you’ll need. About a half-hour of your time could save you from paying labor fees at the repair shop or dealership.

**Tip:** If you want to save money on the motor and regulator, check your local junkyard. A lot of cars get totaled from getting hit on just one side, but parts from the other side are still in perfect condition. This quick tip could help you save a little bit of money.

## **Water Leaking Inside Your Car**

If you notice that your car leaks water on the inside from the outside, there are a few things you can check to fix this common car problem.

Make sure that your car doors are getting shut all the way. Some people are in such a hurry that they shut their door without checking to see if the door is completely shut. On most cars, the car door makes two clicks before it shuts completely. If it only clicks once, it’s bound to leak on the inside. If you’re always that busy you forget to turn around and check, I suggest putting some power into shutting the door hard enough so you know it will click twice and seal.

The other thing you can check is your power windows. Make sure they are rolling up properly. Make sure they are in the tracks nice and straight and when they get to the top, they make it all the way completing a perfect seal.

The last thing to check is your weather stripping. That’s the rubber seals around the frame of the doors, removable tops, and trunks. If they are dirty you can try cleaning them with some really strong cleaner. If they look like they’re cracking or rotting, you are going to have to replace them. They are not the cheapest parts in the world, but they are a pretty easy install. All you need is a flathead screwdriver, pair of wire cutters or heavy-duty scissors, and the new weather stripping. This is like the power window motor/regulator repair, patients is a virtue and a few youtube videos will do you just fine.

## **How To Tell If Your Heater Core Is Bad**

First, let’s understand what the heater core does and where it’s located. The heater core is like a small radiator inside your vehicle under the dashboard, usually on the passenger side. This particular part takes warm antifreeze after it passes through the engine and uses it to warm up the air that flows through the vents of your car when you turn on the heat. It basically performs the same way as the [main radiator](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/2020/02/) does for your engine just in the reverse mode. Instead of cooling down the engine as the main radiator does, the heater core is responsible for warming up the car’s cabin.

There are a few undeniable signs that your heater core is bad or going bad. You’ll probably notice no heat comes out when you turn your heater on, it only blows cold air. You might smell antifreeze in the cabin. That’s because when the heater core leaks it will most likely leak antifreeze on the floor of the passenger side. You will probably notice that your engine is warming up too much and or overheating from the result of losing antifreeze.

You can always take your car problem to your mechanic, but for someone with a general set of tools, you could do this at home. Heater cores are not very hard to remove or reinstall, so if you like rolling up your sleeves, you could save yourself some money.

## **Your Fuel Economy Isn’t What It Once Was**

This common car problem could stem from a number of things, but mostly it’s going to be the result of a lack of general maintenance. When a car rolls off the assembly line it will be set up to provide the perfect fuel-air-mixture to each cylinder creating optimal performance and the best possible fuel economy. If you can keep that perfect fuel-air-mixture going well and spark plugs igniting perfectly, you should be able to keep that same amount of gas mileage for many, many miles.

When your car's fuel economy starts to drop, it’s usually due to a [poor fuel-air-mixture](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/engine-misfire-symptoms/) or bad spark plugs, and there are a few key components you can check. Start with your air filter. It is usually pretty easy to get to, and you will know if it’s dirty and needs to be changed when you see it. Next, check your spark plugs. Pulling two plugs should do the trick. If both plugs look the same, then all the rest will look that way. If you go online and type in what “my spark plugs should look like”, you will know if they need to be changed or if they are good to go.

The next thing you want to do is see if you can get to your fuel filter easily. Sometimes you luck out and it is under your hood, but sometimes it’s under your car close to the gas tank, and if you’re really unlucky, it’s inside of your gas tank. The first two options are something feasible you can check with minimum work and tools. And since they’re pretty inexpensive, I suggest if you’re going to take it off, then you may as well replace it with a new one.

There are two other things you can check into, but the best way to do so is to run a code scanner on your car’s ECU, ECM, and PCM. Code meanings for the scanner should be in the directions for the scanner or you can find them online. You want to look and see if your mass airflow sensor is bad or if your O2 sensors need to be replaced. Your O2 sensors are a little bit tougher to replace, but if you have the time, you can easily make it a DIY project. If it’s your mass airflow sensor, unfortunately, they’re not exactly cheap, but a super cakewalk to replace.

The biggest thing here to remember is that regularly scheduled maintenance can help save you from going through all of this extra work. You can always think about it this way, if it’s a money issue you’re worried about, you are going to have to do these repairs eventually, but you’re also losing money every day that you’re driving in a car with lower gas mileage than it should have.

## **Keeping Your Car Running And On The Road Safely**

Nobody likes to go to the dentist, just saying that word makes people cringe. Not only can it be painful, but it can also be expensive, time-consuming, and boring. But let’s face it, if you don’t go, any problems that you have will only get worse. Common Car Problems work much the same way. If you avoid getting your car scheduled maintenance done, you are setting yourself up for the same fate. Problems will only get worse and will end up costing you more time and money in the end.

It is true, even with [regularly scheduled maintenance](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/bad-spark-plug/) appointments fulfilled, you can still end up with problems, but you can still brush your teeth every day and still get cavities. Regardless if you have been good to your car or not, common car problems will happen and you have to attend to them or pay the consequences.