

Winter Storage Tips



Since we live in a climate where there is winter weather, many of us put our pride & joy away to avoid driving it in snow, slush and salt. Here are some tips and reminders to help give your car the best winter protection:

- Change the oil and filter, unless you are still within the “break-in” period (pre-3,750 or 7,500 miles). Let the engine run for a while.
- Fill the gas tank to the top. You want the smallest air gap in the tank because temperature changes will cause condensation in there. The consensus seems to be that fuel stabilizers are not necessary.
- Wash and detail the car including treating the inside vinyl and leather. Drive the car to remove any standing water that gets trapped in the nooks and crannies and to remove moisture in the exhaust and engine.
- Run the air conditioner for about 10-15 minutes on the last drive to ensure all the moving parts get the lubricant circulated so the seals don’t dry out.
- Clean out the interior really well, leaving nothing behind. Check all small compartments, ashtray, etc. Mice getting into the car can eat wires, vinyl, leather, carpet, etc.
- Apply a silicone spray lubricant to door and trunk seals to minimize sticking.
- Stuff a pot-cleaning pad into the air-box intake to keep mice out.
- Stuff a pot-cleaning pad into the end of the tail pipes and trunk vents (if you have them) to keep mice out.
- Leave the hood open and place several mouse-traps around the car, bait them with peanut butter.
- Spray lightly a bit of Febreze (fabric deodorizer) on both floor mats.
- Make sure the window wash fluid is the anti-freeze kind and not straight water.
- Check the anti-freeze and adjust its strength if needed.
- Top off all other fluids under the hood and also in the gearbox & differential if need be.

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- Keep the CV joints in good shape by keeping the CV boots in good shape. When stored, the boots do not go through a regular routine of being flexed and this may cause them to develop a sort of “memory” such that when you drive it in spring, it may aggravate the start of cracking. You might want to consider going under there and liberally using some “rubber safe” silicone spray and get those (there are 4 on the rear half shafts) babies dripping wet with silicone.
- Pump the tires to about 35-45 PSI to avoid flat-spotting. Place a piece of scrap carpet or foam insulation under each tire while parked.
- Support the wiper blade arms with a rag or wrap the blades in food wrap to help maintain the rubber and stop it sticking to the windshield.
- Unlatch the soft top and leave the windows down a bit - this will take the tension of the top fabric and promote some air circulation in the interior.
- Keep the parking brake off to avoid having the pads rust to the rotors.
- Sweep the garage floor and lay down a plastic tarp or park the car on linoleum. Concrete can get damp in the winter and if the car sits on linoleum or a tarp it will help to keep most of the moisture away from the car so the underbody does not collect condensation.
- Disconnect the battery. As some recommend, removal of the battery will completely prevent electrolysis between the thousands of spots in your electrical system where it could occur. If you remove it, do not store it on concrete. Make sure you have the stereo code before unhooking the battery! Buy a “battery minder” which differs from a “trickle charger” in that it knows when the battery is fully charged and thus turns itself off. Motorcycle dealers are a good source for these ‘intelligent’ battery maintainers.
- Put a breathable car cover on.
- DO NOT start the car unless you are going to drive it. When the car sits, all the oil drains into the oil pan. Starting the car is the hardest thing on the engine. Doing it once in the spring is better than several times throughout the winter.
- You may want to call your insurance agent to suspend some of your insurance while the car sits in the garage. Rumour has it if we have a nice day in the middle of winter and you want to take it for a drive you can call your agent and get coverage restored for the day. Call your agent to make sure this is an option with your policy first!
- In the spring, start it up and let it idle until it's almost warmed up before driving it anywhere and then drive it easy for a couple of miles so your transmission, differential & CV joints can get a good lube "workout".

Phew, that was a lot of work. Now sit back and relax in front of the fire with a good Miata book. See you on the road next Spring.