

## BEST WHEELS • OAKVILLE

# Be your own mechanic

## Take better care of your vehicle

(NC)—Just because you are not a mechanic, doesn't mean that you can't take better care of your vehicle — and save some money in the process. Following is a list of basic and common sense tips that can make a big difference in how your vehicle performs and how long it will last. A little bit of effort on your part can go a long way towards protecting this major investment.

- Check your tire pressures on a regular basis, especially if you are going on a trip or carrying a heavy load. Improperly inflated tires can have a major effect on the way your vehicle handles, and make a huge difference on how quickly your tires wear out. If you are not comfortable with doing this yourself, go to a reputable full-serve service station and ask the attendant for assistance.

- Check your oil yourself or have the attendant check it every time you fill up with gas. It's basic common sense. A low oil level, which could easily happen through a leak or many other reasons, can do serious damage to your engine. And always remember, the RED light on your dashboard is not an oil check light. It is an ENGINE DANGER light. By the time it comes on, you are most likely already in serious trouble.

- If you want to check your oil yourself, it's easy to do. Fully warm up your vehicle then park it on level ground and turn off the engine (unless you have a dry oil sump like in certain Porsches and a few other high performance cars — in this case you must leave the engine running).

Wait a few minutes for the oil to drain into the crankcase. Open the hood and identify the oil check dipstick (make sure it is not the automatic transmission dipstick). Remove the dipstick, wipe it clean, replace it for a few seconds and then remove it again and check the reading based on the marks. Add a quality brand name oil like

Castrol if necessary and do not overfill. It's that simple.

- Read your vehicle instruction book. Then read your vehicle instruction book again. Thousands of hours have gone into the preparation of this manual and it will be full of excellent recommendations on how to keep your car running well — from the people who actually designed the car. Follow their advice carefully on maintenance, safety and the correct type of lubricants to use.

- Change your oil every 5,000 kilometres or every three months. While that probably exceeds your manufacturers warranty requirements, it will pay off down the road. Supplying fresh, clean high quality oil like Castrol GTX or Castrol Syntec is the best single thing you can do for your engine.

- Check your automatic transmission fluid monthly. It has a dipstick similar to the engine oil dipstick, but normally is checked with the ENGINE RUNNING. Adding a little transmission fluid is a minor cost. Rebuilding your transmission is a major expense. See your owners manual for details.

- Carry, in proper containers, at all times, a couple of litres of gas, some engine antifreeze or coolant, windshield wiper solvent and a supply of high quality engine oil like Castrol GTX or Castrol Syntec.

- Consider asking your installer for a synthetic oil like Castrol Syntec. It's a little more expensive but if you want the utmost in protection for a vehicle that you plan to keep, it's worth the premium.

A wealth of interesting and valuable information on motor oils and lubricants can be found at [www.castrolcanada.com](http://www.castrolcanada.com) or other well known petroleum web sites.

- News Canada

# Finding a good auto repair facility

(NC)—Finding a good automotive service facility is like finding a doctor or a financial advisor: building a relationship based on trust will be important and takes time. Knowing a car's history because it's been worked on before at the same centre can make problems easier to find, and could mean savings on repair work.

To help motorists, the automotive service team at Canadian Tire offers these tips:

- In a larger facility, get to know the service advisor. A service advisor is there to answer questions and can help customers understand the recommendations of the technician assessing the vehicle.

- In a smaller facility, get to know the technician. Get referrals from friends, relatives and business associates. You'll likely get a better idea from seeking several different opinions rather than relying on the perspective of just one person.

- Written estimates should be provided and discussed before going ahead with repair work. When in doubt, take the written estimate somewhere else and get a second opinion.

- Meet the people that will be working on the vehicle. Putting a face to the name makes communication (and trust) easier.

- Don't be afraid to ask the service advisor questions: what sort of training do their technicians receive? How often? Do they have the latest computer and diagnostic equipment?

- Check the customer area for information about the facility — most service centres post their rates and billing information

- Go with a facility that stands behind its work: look for a 'customer promise' — it will give you a sense of how they value your business.

Motorists can help the automotive service technician to help them, too.

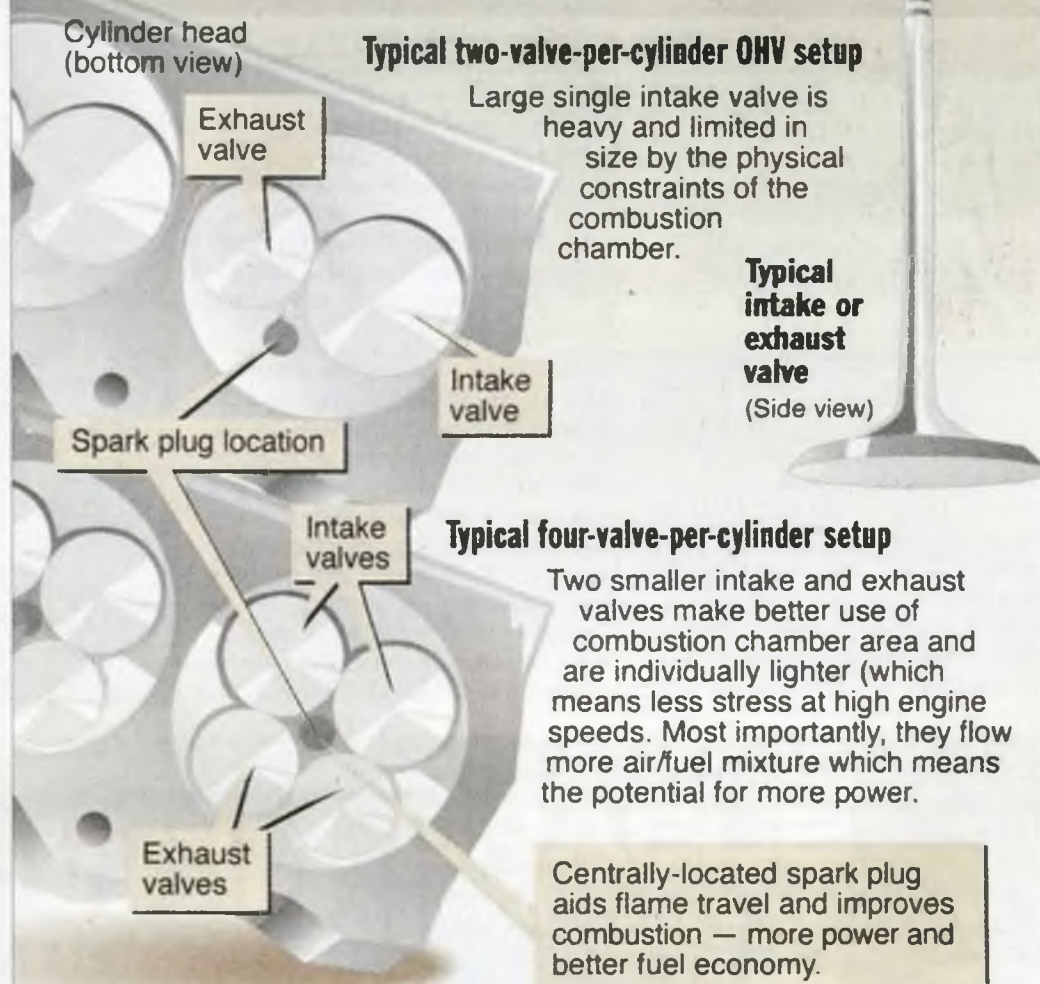
- Every so often, drivers should roll down the windows and get to know the sound of the car when it's healthy so they'll be able to notice when it requires service.

- Reading through the owner's manual will help drivers know what to expect in terms of the vehicle's service needs.

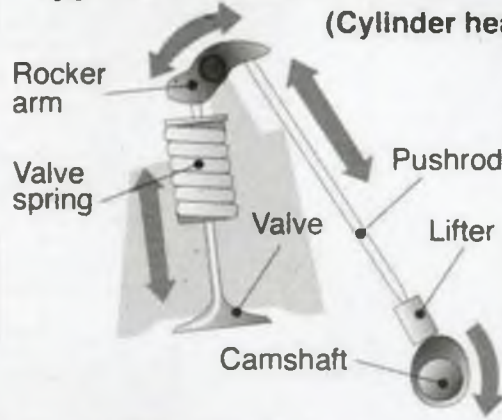
## A U T O G R A P H

# Why four valves per cylinder?

Every year, fewer engines of the old two-valve-per-cylinder variety are built. To squeeze every ounce of power out of a small-displacement engine, manufacturers have to make them more efficient at moving air and fuel. Hence, a growing number of new engines use four- and even five-valve technology. Here's how it works.

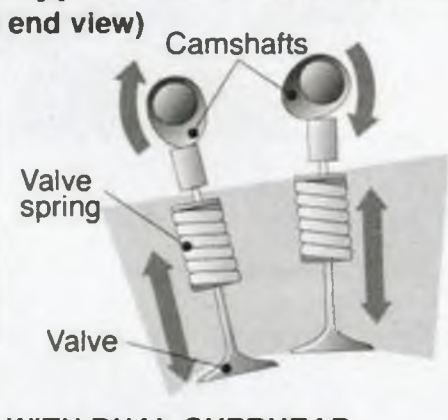


## Typical two-valve head



**THE TYPICAL OVERHEAD VALVE SETUP**, found on many engines such as a typical V8, has many moving parts — the more surfaces that touch one another, the more wear and tear the engine endures and the less precise the valvetrain becomes over time.

## Typical four-valve head



**WITH DUAL OVERHEAD CAMSHAFTS WORKING DIRECTLY** on the intake and exhaust valves — but above them — there are fewer moving parts. As well, the valves are smaller, hence less valve-spring fatigue and higher RPM capabilities (which usually increases horsepower).

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# Wet driving safety tips

(NC)—Besides making sure you have quality all-season tires for your vehicle, here are some general tips from Michelin for driving safely in wet weather:

- Check the forecast. As much as you want to believe the forecast, weather in Canada is at best unpredictable. Before hitting the road: ensure your windshield wipers, all of your lights and your front and rear defrosters are working properly.

- Check your tire pressure. Before you take to the highway make sure your tires are properly inflated. The quality of your car's handling is directly related your tires' surface contact to the road. Over or under-inflated tires can increase tire wear and decrease traction, especially in wet driving conditions.

- Check your tread wear. For the best traction in wet weather, be sure your tires have plenty of tread depth to allow water to channel out from under the tread. If your tires are severely worn, your car could hydroplane.

- Consider high-performance tires. To ensure the best traction on wet roads, you should consider using proper tires. High-performance tires such

as the Michelin Pilot Sport A/S, part of the manufacturers line of Pilot tires (performance tires), offer all types of drivers a range of high performance to ultra high performance tires with exceptional wet traction. They are an ideal choice for people who want an extra level of driving security during wet weather.

- When it rains...slow down. It's important to slow down at the first sight of precipitation. Because of the mixture of oil, fluids and debris on the road, the driving surface is the most slippery when the rain first starts to fall.

- Increase the distances between you and other cars. Conditions are constantly changing based on the severity and duration of the rain, as well as the surface characteristics and drainage capabilities of the road. Increase the distances in which you follow other vehicles to give yourself more time to slow down and manoeuvre around trouble.

- Beware of shiny surfaces. Be wary of low-traction areas that develop on heavily traveled or aging roads. These low-traction areas often appear as shiny spots on the driving surface.

- News Canada

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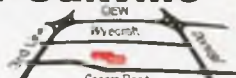
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