How to Change a Flat Tire (Step by Step, Safely)

Cars & Other Vehicles · about 19 minutes · 2026-11-11

A fully illustrated, 30-step roadside guide: secure the car, use the jack correctly, swap the wheel, tighten in a star pattern, and decide whether to repair or replace the tire.

Phase 1 — Stop Safely

1. **Recognize the flat early**
   Recognize the flat early.
2. **Find a level, solid, wide spot**
   Find a level, solid, wide spot.
3. **Signal and switch on the hazards**
   Signal and switch on the hazards.
4. **Get passengers out and back**
   Get passengers out and back.
5. **Set warning triangles or flares**
   Set warning triangles or flares.
6. **Chock the wheels**
   Chock the wheels.
7. **Lay out the tools**
   Lay out the tools.
8. **Inspect the spare before trusting it**
   Inspect the spare before trusting it.
9. **Confirm the ground is firm**
   Confirm the ground is firm.

Phase 2 — Lift the Car Correctly

10. **Locate the manufacturer's jack point**
    Locate the manufacturer's jack point.
11. **Seat the jack squarely**
    Seat the jack squarely.
12. **Crack the lug nuts before lifting**
    Crack the lug nuts before lifting.
13. **Remove the wheel cover if needed**
    Remove the wheel cover if needed.
14. **Raise until the tire clears**
    Raise until the tire clears.

Phase 3 — Swap the Wheel

15. **Remove the lug nuts completely**

    Remove the lug nuts completely.

16. **Pull the wheel straight toward you**

    Pull the wheel straight toward you.

17. **Slide the flat under the car as a backup**

    Slide the flat under the car as a backup.

18. **Line up the holes or studs**

    Line up the holes or studs.

19. **Hand-tighten all nuts**

    Hand-tighten all nuts.

20. **Snug in a star pattern**

    Snug in a star pattern.

21. **Lower until the tire just touches**

    Lower until the tire just touches.

22. **Tighten firmly in the same star pattern**

    Tighten firmly in the same star pattern.

23. **Lower fully and do a final torque**

    Lower fully and do a final torque.

Phase 4 — After the Swap

24. **Check pressure and stow everything**

    Check pressure and stow everything.

25. **Drive slowly and listen**

    Drive slowly and listen.

26. **Get the torque re-checked**

    Get the torque re-checked.

27. **Decide repair versus replacement**

    Decide repair versus replacement.

28. **Reset the TPMS light**

    Reset the TPMS light.

29. **Restock the emergency kit**

    Restock the emergency kit.

30. **Set a monthly prevention routine**

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Sources

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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/How-to-Change-a-Flat-Tire. Corrections: https://www.howcompass.com/correc