

Car Care

Tire sidewalls have a lot to say

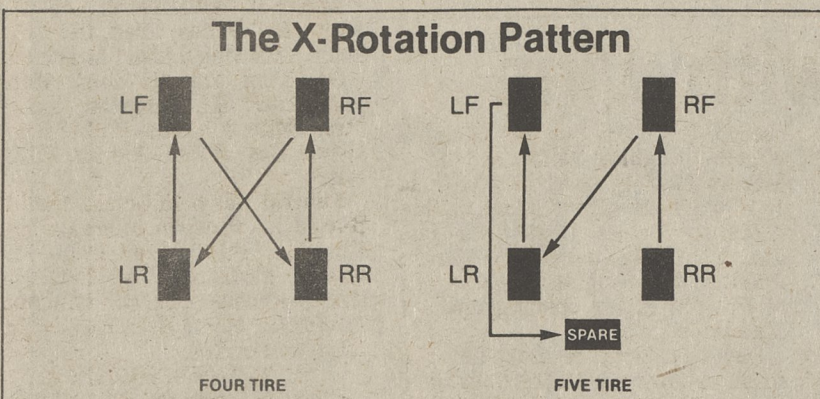
Although they may not be in the same league as Shakespeare, Dickens, Melville or Hemingway, the tires on your car do, believe it or not, have much to offer in terms of good reading.

Sound silly? Consider that the average tire produced by the Uniroyal Tire Company, for example, has nearly 20 pieces of relevant information printed on its sidewall.

Reading a tire's sidewall may not be your idea of the best way to spend a winter's evening - it doesn't exactly fit comfortably into an easy chair near the fireplace as does a copy of War and Peace. But tires do contain useful information for you, the tire consumer.

The drawing shows letters, codes and warnings on the sidewalls of the new generation all-season radial tires.

1. Manufacturer.
2. Size designation. "P" refers to the fact that it is a passenger tire; "185" refers to the tire's width in millimeters; "80" is the tire's "aspect ratio" - its height from the rim to the tread surface - in this case 80 percent of the tire's width; "R" means the tire is a radial design; and "13" represents the rim diameter the tire fits. Required by law.
3. M+S. This means the tire meets the Tire and Rim Association's definition of a mud and snow tire.



4. The manufacturer's registered tire brand name.

5. Safety warning. This wording agreed upon by the Tire and Rim Association and the tire industry, is designed to alert the consumer to what could happen if guidelines governing overloading and underinflation are not followed.

6. Uniform Tire Quality Grading (UTQG) system. This rating by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is designed to help consumers determine the quality of tires based on treadwear, traction and temperature tests on a government-specified test track. The treadwear rating of 240 translates into a treadlife expectancy of 72,000 miles, with a base 100 rating on a scale of A, B, and C measures braking force at 40 MPH on concrete and asphalt surfaces. The tire's B rating is well within acceptable wet traction performance levels. The C temperature rating relates to heat resistance level measurements on a flywheel. The C rating indicates the minimum levels all passenger tires must pass for a prescribed distance at 85 MPH. UTQG ratings on sidewalls are required by law.

7. Generic name for the materials that make up the tire's carcass ply-casing construction. Required by law.

8. Denotes the material of which the belts are made. These belts are placed in the tire below the tread area. Required by law.

9. Tread 3 Ply. This designation relates to the tire's construction, with one polyester ply in the carcass and two steel belts below the tread surface. Required by law.

10. Sidewall 1 Ply. Refers to the one layer of polyester cord that makes up the sidewall of the tire.

11. Standard Load. This denotes the fact that the tire is of the "Standard" load type most common in passenger tires. The load range varies depending on the size of the tire.

12. Max Load. This designation relates to the maximum load per wheel the tire can safely accommodate. For this tire, it is 590 kilograms or 1,301 pounds per tire. Required by law.

13. At Max Infl. Refers to the tire's maximum inflation pressure when cold. That is, when the tire has not been in use. For this tire, maximum inflation translates to 35 pounds per square inch. Required by law.

14. Manufacturer's mold type designation for internal inventory purposes.

15. Manufacturer's mold serial number for internal inventory purposes.

16. Size designation of the tire. Required by law.

17. Denotes the fact that the tire is of radial design and construction, as opposed to bias design and construction. Required by law.

18. Refers to the fact that the tire does not require a tube inside the carcass. Required by law.

Additional information can be found on the back side of most tires, however, it often duplicates what is on the tire's curb side or is used by the manufacturer for mold designation and inventory purposes.

Obviously, there's a great deal of information on the sidewalls of a tire. Although it may not pose a serious threat to our literary masters, this information does, nonetheless, tell you a great deal about the capabilities, type and quality of the tires we simply take for granted.

Good driving and good reading!

What to look for in brakes

For the motorist who has a brake job for his car on his list of automotive needs, Car Care Council offers these questions to help determine if he or she is getting the best job possible.

1. Will the rotors or drums need turning or replacing? Brake linings press against disc rotors in the front, drums in the rear, to slow the car. If drums or discs become pitted or scored, they must be resurfaced on a brake lathe.

If discs or drums already have had too much resurfacing and are too thin for further use, they must be replaced. This will substantially increase the cost of the brake job.

2. Will the wheel cylinders or calipers be rebuilt or replaced? Wheel cylinders activated by brake fluid pressure, press brake shoes against the drums in the rear; calipers push the pads against rotors in the front.

Damage from contaminated brake fluid, road corrosives, dirt and grime plus normal wear require cylinders or calipers to be overhauled or replaced.

3. What kind of linings should be installed? Most late model front wheel drive cars carry more weight in the front than older cars and the brakes tend to operate at a higher temperature. Semi-metallic brakes, standard equipment on many new cars, draw heat away from the friction surface. Replacement linings, whether semi-metallic or the more familiar organic material, should be of a quality to meet or exceed manufacturer's requirements.

4. Will the brake fluid be completely drained, flushed and replaced? Brake fluid attracts water which, after many thousands of miles, can corrode brake components. Fresh brake fluid or flushing compound should be used to remove any dirt, rust or other damaging material from the system. All air must be removed from the system after the brake work is completed.

5. What about the wheel bearings and seals? The wheels spin on bearings that should be checked for wear and proper lubrication. Wheel bearing grease is formulated to withstand high temperatures and survive long wear. The seals are designed to keep grease in and dirt out.

Any brake repairs means replacing worn or damaged parts with components equal to, or exceeding, the car's original equipment. As with any automotive repair work, the technician should provide a written estimate detailing the work to be done.

A quality brake job may have a higher price tag than "bargain" brake work, says Car Care Council, but in the long run it's likely to be the real bargain in terms of safety, long life and satisfaction.

For the price of a stamped, self-addressed envelope, Car Care Council offers a copy of "How to Keep your Brakes from Letting You Down." An informative illustrated pamphlet that includes a variety of tips on the braking system. Send your request to: CCC, Dept. "B", 600 Renaissance Center, Detroit, MI 48243.

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Make sure your car is safe

Safety, like quality, begins as an attitude, a way of thinking that's fundamental in shaping a vehicle's structure and components from the drawing board to assembly.

Automobile manufacturers commit enormous resources every year to the development and testing of all car lines and their occupant protection features.

Body structures are carefully designed from the start with passenger safety as a primary concern. After they are validated for theoret-

ical soundness, structures are assembled into prototype vehicles and subjected to exhaustive crash testing.

Operating safety applies to a vehicle's ability, with the aid of the driver, to avoid an accident.

Of course, it's up to the driver to make the best use of the vehicle's accident-avoidance equipment. This involves driving defensively, reacting in time, and such seemingly small things as properly regulating the ventilation system (to help the driver stay alert).

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Black smoke comes from faulty choke

What causes black exhaust smoke? Why is it usually a cold-weather problem? Most of it, says Car Care Council, it's due to a faulty carburetor choke that is sticking shut and not allowing enough air into the carburetor.

The carburetor choke is designed to improve cold-weather starting by providing a richer fuel mixture. As the engine warms up, the choke plate opens allowing more air into the carburetor for the correct air-fuel mixture.

A sticking choke prevents fuel from mixing with air causing the engine to run rich.

Often, a simple adjustment of the choke spring will correct the problem.

Black smoke from a rich-running engine may also be due to an old, worn carburetor or a severely clogged air cleaner.

A complete carburetor overhaul or replacement of the old part may be necessary to correct the problem.

Air filters require regular service, particularly if you drive in dusty or heavily industrialized areas. Dirt-clogged passages prevent air from reaching the engine. A simple test is to hold the air cleaner with a lightbulb in the center. If you can't see light through the filter, it's time to replace the filter.

Repairing cars is not cheap

Emission control checks and computer analyzers are just two of a dozen expensive machines that assist auto technicians with normal maintenance checkups. The new 1985 autos feature something new — computer boxes which, when plugged into a mainframe computer at the dealership, will detect hidden problems and irregularities.

When you start dealing with technological performance, the average gas station just doesn't have the proper equipment needed to detect problems in today's car. Even the do-it-yourselfer will, at some point, need proper manufacturer's services to keep his car in tip-top shape.