

# How to change a flat tire

Moderate · 30 min to do · Free with your spare

Get somewhere safe and level, block a wheel so the car can't roll, loosen the lug nuts before you jack the car up, and tighten them in a star pattern. Then check the spare's pressure and get to a tire shop.

## YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ Your spare tire
- ☐ The jack and lug wrench (usually under the trunk floor)
- ☐ Your owner's manual
- ☐ A tire pressure gauge
- ☐ Wheel wedges, reflective triangles and a flashlight, if you have them

## DO IT LIKE THIS

- 1 **Pull over somewhere flat, as far from traffic as you can.** A parking lot or side street is safest; on a highway, take the next exit if you can. Hazards on, park, parking brake on.
- 2 **Set reflective triangles behind the car, about 100 feet back on fast roads.**
- 3 **Block the wheel on the opposite corner from the flat with a wheel wedge.** A large rock works if you don't have one.
- 4 **Loosen each lug nut, turning counterclockwise, while the tire is still on the ground.** Don't take them off yet.
- 5 **Put the jack at the exact spot your owner's manual shows, and raise the car until the flat is a few inches off the ground.**
- 6 **Remove the nuts and the flat, and put the spare on.** Snug the nuts in a star pattern, going to the nut across from the one you just did instead of the one next to it.
- 7 **Lower the car and tighten the nuts firmly in the same pattern.**
- 8 **Check the spare's pressure with your gauge.** Spares sit unused and often lose air, and most compact spares take about 60 psi, much more than your other tires.
- 9 **Drive a few miles, then tighten the lug nuts one more time.** At the tire shop, ask them to tighten the nuts to your car's torque spec (it's in the owner's manual). AAA says the final tightening should be done with a calibrated torque wrench, not an impact wrench.

**Watch out** Compact spares are only meant to get you to a shop. They aren't meant for speeds above 50 mph, so replace the tire that day or the next.

**DAD NOTE** Practice once in your driveway, on a nice day, before you need it.

Full lesson: [aptkeys.com/your-place/car-ownership/how-to-change-a-flat-tire/](https://aptkeys.com/your-place/car-ownership/how-to-change-a-flat-tire/)

Checked October 3, 2026. Sources: Consumer Reports; AAA; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.