

How Do I Change a Flat Tire?

Before you ever have a flat

It is crucial to familiarize yourself with your car. Dig the car manual out from under the stash of ketchup packets, napkins, and tampons in your glove compartment and read it. Locate your doughnut (a.k.a. spare tire), jack, and tire iron (or lug wrench). Let's keep that trunk cleaned out so you can get to these items quickly and easily.

I also recommend keeping some work gloves, a pair of wheel chocks (blocks to place around the tire opposite the flat to prevent the car from rolling), and a 2 or 3-foot metal pipe (which will fit snugly over the end of your tire iron) in your trunk. By the way, if you prefer to protect your brand new dress from the filthy, dirty tire and tools, you can add disposable paper coveralls found at your local paint store.



Now change that flat!

1. Get to a safe place! When you think you have a flat, drive to where the ground is firm and level. You should safely pull several feet off the side of the road. Put your car into park, engage the parking break, and put on your hazard lights. You may also want to put out hazard triangles to let other drivers know that there is a distressed car ahead.

2. Get your equipment from the trunk. You will need your spare tire, jack, tire iron, pipe, and wheel chocks. Put on the coveralls and gloves if you have them. Place the wheel chocks on both sides of the tire diagonally opposite from the flat. For example, if your rear driver-side tire is the flat, secure the front passenger-side tire, and vice versa.

3. Loosen your lug nuts. I learned this one the hard way! Take off the hubcap and loosen lug nuts before jacking up the car, duh! If your car is raised, the tire will spin when you try to loosen the nuts. Auto shops use pneumatic tools that tighten nuts and make them difficult to remove by hand, but by adding a pipe over the end of the tire iron for leverage, any girl can work those nuts off. Remember the handy phrase: “righty tighty, lefty loosey”. Loosen the nuts, skipping every other one until you’ve worked your way around the wheel.

4. Jack up that car! Now it is time to jack up the car. Your car manual will show you where to properly position the jack. You’ll be surprised how easy it is to lift the car. Jacks employ either a screw or a lever mechanism that makes the job almost effortless for even the girliest of girls. Raise the car enough to get the flat tire off and accommodate the spare tire.

5. Pull off the flat. Completely remove the lug nuts, store them in a safe place, and then remove the flat tire.



6. Attach your spare. Put the spare tire on with the air valve facing out (I have placed a tire on backwards when I had to change my first one in the pouring rain and did not discover it until I had only 2 lugs left) and screw on the lug nuts, again alternating until you've finished the wheel.

7. Lower your car. Lower the jack and re-tighten the lug nuts using your pipe for leverage.

8. Put the tools away. Put your hubcap, tools, and flat tire in your trunk. If the flat is too heavy to get in your trunk, you may have to drag it further off the road and come back for it later with help. You will need the rim, so don't forget where you leave the tire!

9. Drive away! After you change your flat tire, drive to the nearest or most trusted auto shop. A small doughnut-sized spare tire is only supposed to be driven on for about 30 miles, below 45mph.

