

Driving Insights



Stay up-to-date with the latest information for drivers, including driver safety advice and tips.

Winter 2024/25



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Better with every move.

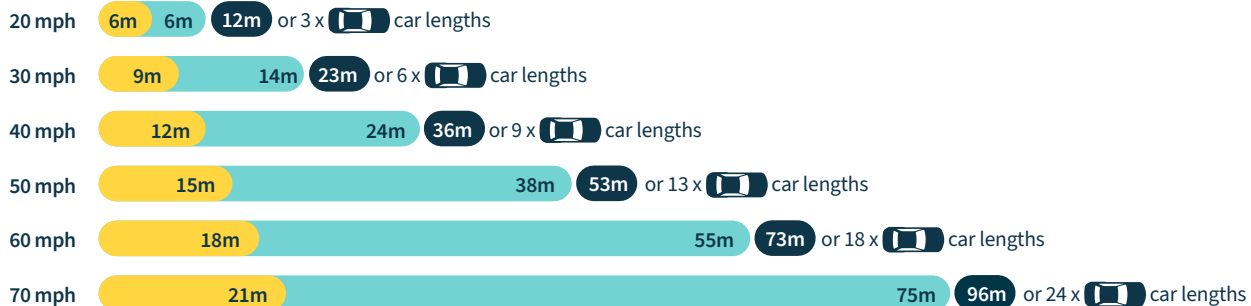
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SOCIETE GENERALE GROUP

Remember your stopping distances

By understanding stopping and braking distances, you will be able to judge the space needed between the car ahead of you and your car. This means you will have plenty of reaction time if someone suddenly stops and have full view of the road ahead, avoiding a collision.



In good weather and clear road conditions:



Thinking distance

How far you travel before you to react to something in front of you.



Braking distance

How far you travel between pressing the brakes and the car coming to a stop.



Total stopping distance

Combined thinking and braking distance.

Adjust your driving to the conditions



In wet conditions:

Double the gap between you and the car in front.



Double the gap



In icy conditions:

Leave a far bigger gap. Some advice suggests increasing it by as much ten times.



Leave a far bigger gap



Five motoring scams to watch out for

Fraud accounts for 40% of all reported crime in the UK, according to industry body UK Finance. At three million cases in 2023, that's equal to one every 11 seconds – so it's important to be alert.

1 Scam: Chargepoint payments

Background: Membership-free access (via a web portal or contactless card) is mandatory for all rapid chargepoints and some networks have sites offering similar ad-hoc payments for slower units.

The scam: Ionity and Ubitricity have warned that QR codes linking to their payment portals are being replaced, directing drivers to sites that steal their bank details.

Avoiding it: Smartphone apps (either the network's own, or a roaming provider such as Bonnet or Zap-Pay) are the most secure way to pay for charging. Otherwise, look out for tampering on signs and if you're concerned, search manually for the network's website and payment portal.

2 Scam: Cashless car parks

Background: Most large car park operators have smartphone apps for taking payments, while some have a secure web portal or phone line for drivers to enter their details.

The scam: Scammers have set up alternative websites to steal drivers' card details, either by replacing QR codes on signposts or boosting their rankings on search engines.

Avoiding it: Keep an eye out for alterations to signs and look for spelling 'mistakes' in web addresses. A genuine payment portal will also have an SSL certificate, so you'll see a padlock symbol on your browser's address bar and the URL will begin with "https://".

3 Scam: Card skimming at fuel pumps

Background: While chip and PIN cards are more secure than swiping and signing, they are still vulnerable to attacks

The scam: Installing a slimline device called a 'skimmer' in a card reader enables fraudsters to scrape bank details from the chip. A 2017 poll by the European Association for Secure Transactions found 14% of bank cards were compromised at fuel stations.

Avoiding it: Skimmers can't record a PIN, so look out for anything unusual on the pump's keypad and always cover your hand while entering your number. If the pump looks suspicious, pay at the kiosk instead.

4 Scam: DVLA requests

Background: All drivers are used to getting emails and letters from the DVLA, which has made the agency easier to spoof.

The scam: Fraudsters contact drivers to request licence and bank information for tax refunds and unpaid bills. The DVLA says reports of fraudulent emails, text messages and phone calls increased by 603% in the 12 months to Q3 2020.

Avoiding it: The DVLA will never ask for bank details via texts or emails and it advises against sharing licence or vehicle information online. Anyone with queries should only get in touch using contact details published on websites with a ".gov.uk" domain name.

5 Scam: Parking penalties

Background: Automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) systems have made it easier to log arrival and departure times in car parks, and for operators to issue penalties if drivers stay too long.

The scam: A fake text message from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) warns drivers that they have an outstanding parking fine, and could have to pay more, face prosecution or be banned if they don't settle what they owe.

Avoiding it: The DVSA has stressed that it doesn't issue or process parking charges, so drivers should report messages if they claim anything different. Look out for spelling any punctuation errors as a red flag.

Read more

Help stop the scammers

If you spot a scam, please do report it. You'll be helping to protect other drivers and playing a role in tracking down the people responsible.

<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/how-to-report-fraud>
<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/phishing-scams>

Staying safe on the roads this winter

Planning ahead: Safe driving always starts with preparation – and that’s even more important in winter. We think there are two things that are essential to do.

Ready for the conditions

Winter conditions put extra demands on cars, so you need to be ready for them.

- **Battery:** Cold weather can be hard on batteries; it slows the chemical reactions that enable it to hold and transfer power just as systems such as lighting and heating are working hardest. A health check offers useful peace of mind – even in electric and hybrid vehicles, which need a low-voltage battery to power up.
- **Tyres:** Grip is vital all year round, but especially in winter when the roads are wet and cold. Make sure tyres are inflated properly (the correct pressures are usually printed on a sticker inside the driver’s side door) and have at least 2mm of tread left.
- **Screenwash:** Not all screen wash fluid is the same. Summer formula has cleaning agents to remove backed-on bug splatters and tree sap, whereas the winter fluid is formulated to reduce the chances of it freezing in a cold snap. You’ll also use more fluid in winter when the roads are gritted, so check levels regularly.
- **Wipers:** Damaged or perished wipers won’t clear your screen effectively when the weather turns, so it’s worth making sure they’re in good working order.
- **Lights:** Longer nights and heavy rain, snow and fog mean you’ll be using your lights more often in the winter months. Regular walk-around checks can help spot any faulty units.
- **Glass:** Windscreen cracks and chips can spread quickly as the glass expands and contracts in cold weather. Spotting a chip early could be the difference between a cheap repair and an expensive replacement.

Ready for emergencies

While a breakdown is never good news, it can be particularly bad in winter. Not only is it likely to be colder and darker than other times of the year, you could be waiting for longer, as recovery services tend to be busier as well.

With that in mind, here’s our suggestion for kit to keep in your car. Some of it applies all year round, of course, but we think there are a few extra items that it’s worth adding in the colder months.

All-year equipment

- **Breakdown service contact details**
- **High-vis jacket**
- **Torch**
- **Warning triangle**
- **Spare tyre or a breakdown kit** (containing tyre sealant and a compressor)
- **First aid kit**
- **Sunglasses** (for summer or winter sunshine)

Extra winter equipment

- **Windscreen scraper** (or de-icer)
- **Warm coats or jumpers, in case you have to wait by the side of the road**
- **Waterproofs**
- **Emergency blanket**
- **Pair of boots or shoes with strong grip**
- **Folding snow shovel**
- **Piece of carpet, mat or cardboard to put under your tyres to create grip**
- **Food and drink** (don’t leave liquids in the car overnight)

Staying safe on the roads this winter

Driving in the winter is very different than at other times of the year. A single journey may involve different weather, road and traffic conditions, so we need to be prepared for each one. This means that we need to adapt the way we drive to the conditions.

1 Use the right gears

When setting off, using a higher gear with lower revs will give you more control over the vehicle. This also applies when you are driving in slippery conditions and snow, but don't go so slowly that you risk losing momentum and becoming stranded.

2 Focus on your steering if you skid

If you do get into a skid in snow or ice, it's best to take your feet off the pedals and steer the vehicle to safety. Only use your brakes when it is not possible to steer your way out of trouble.



3 Leave space for braking

Take a look at our braking distance graphic on [page 2](#) and remember to leave enough space to stop.

4 Use major roads wherever possible

In icy or snowy conditions, main roads are much more likely to have been gritted, plus the flow of traffic can help keep them clear. It's also worth remembering that if you get into difficulties, a breakdown vehicle should find it significantly easier to get to you if you are on a main road.

5 Go slow in fog and snow

If you have to drive in heavy snowfall or thick fog, use dipped headlights and fog lights. In addition, if the conditions come on suddenly (which can happen easily with both fog and snow), remember to slow down gradually and keep your distance from the car in front. With a sudden drop in visibility, if you brake hard, the vehicle behind you might not notice in time to react.

6 Watch out for potholes

Freezing temperatures are more likely to create potholes, while wet conditions can make them harder to see – or, if you do see them, harder to work out how deep they are. Potholes are always worth avoiding, as they can damage your vehicle. But in difficult conditions, they can also cause you to lose control of the vehicle temporarily, which could then lead to bigger problems if the roads are slippery.



7 Take care around flood water

Heavy rain or melting snow can create flood water on the road. The deepest water is normally by the kerb, so try to use the middle of the road if you have to drive through. Take your time, avoid sudden acceleration and remember to check your brakes once you've reached the other side. That said, an even better option is to take a different route, particularly on country roads that have plants growing on both sides, as the water may be much deeper than you realise.

Driving an electric car in winter

Although driving an electric car has some unique benefits in winter, there are a few extra points worth bearing in mind to stay safe and keep moving – luckily, they're easy.

Cabin preconditioning

If you're fortunate enough to drive an electric car, then you may already be familiar with cabin preconditioning. It means you can turn on the heaters using an app, and get into a warm car with clear windows every morning instead of running late scraping away at the screen.

Convenience aside, it's also a good way to preserve your range – which could be slightly shorter in winter due to the heaters working harder and the effects of cold weather on the battery. Most cars will use mains power if they're still plugged in, and they'll heat the battery to its most efficient operating temperature before departure too. That extra range could be useful if you get diverted.

Regenerative braking

Regenerative braking is one of the perks of driving an electric (or hybrid) car. It uses the resistance of the magnetic fields within the motor to slow the vehicle down and can often handle all but the most sudden stops without engaging the mechanical brakes. This not only reduces brake dust emissions, but it also converts kinetic energy into electricity, which is supplied back to the battery and can be used to drive the car later on.

However, in winter, sharp regenerative braking responses can unbalance the car and cause it to skid on slippery roads. It's worth switching it to a gentler setting, either via the paddles on the back of the steering wheel or within the car's menus, to help stay in control.

Tyres

We already mentioned tyre pressure on the previous pages, but it's even more important for electric cars. They tend to be heavier than their petrol or diesel equivalents, while the battery position gives them a lower centre of gravity. This puts extra strain on the tyres – as does the fact they tend to respond quicker when you are accelerating. Make sure they're inflated properly to get the best possible grip.

Battery temperature

While batteries are a concern for all drivers in cold conditions, they are a particular challenge for electric car owners. Some models see a drop of around 10% to 30% in range until the battery has warmed up. Charging speeds can also be affected, with home charging sometimes taking an hour or two longer than usual, while rapid charging could take an extra 15 minutes or so.

If this is your first winter with a new EV, then it's worth paying attention to those changes for the first few cold weather drives and allowing a bit of extra time for your journey. Some vehicles will automatically pre-warm the battery if the navigation is set to a rapid charger, while others have a setting to activate this manually.

For a few more ideas about how you can improve your car's range in cold conditions, please read the box below.

Keeping your range up when the mercury falls

It's likely your car's range will fall to some extent in cold conditions, but there's a lot you can do to keep this to a minimum. As well as the heating suggestions we've made in the article, you could:

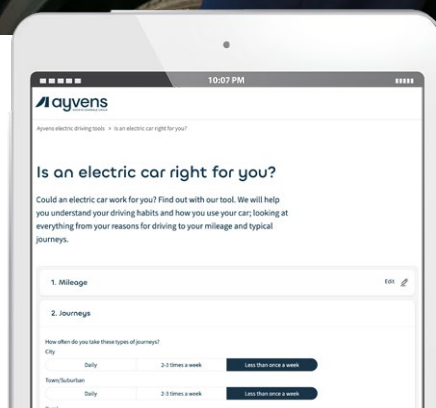
- Delay charging sessions to finish just before departure, so the battery is still warm when you leave
- Winter tyres usually have a higher rolling resistance than all-season or summer tyres - they are good for safety, but will probably reduce your range.
- Remove any excess weight from the vehicle
- Keep the battery above 20%, as this supports its thermal management system
- Encourage your passengers to keep their coats and jumpers on in the car
- Use heated seats and a heated steering wheel to warm people up, as they use less power than the aircon system
- Use eco mode - though this can reduce the performance of your heaters
- Drive more slowly and efficiently (which is generally a good idea in difficult conditions anyway)

Will an electric car work for you?

We've created a set of EV tools designed to make it easier for you to evaluate how well these vehicles might work for you.

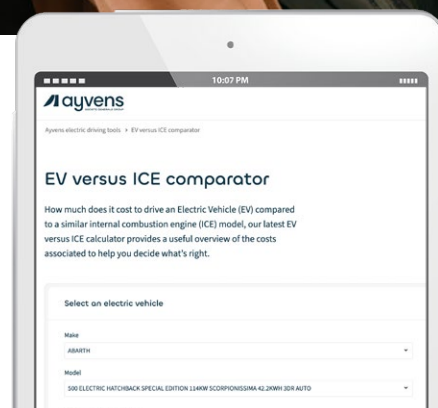
The tools can help car and van drivers explore if an EV would be right for them, as well as giving you a way to calculate how much an electric vehicle might cost you to run on a per mile basis.

We have five tools all designed to help you evaluate if a EV could work for you or your business:



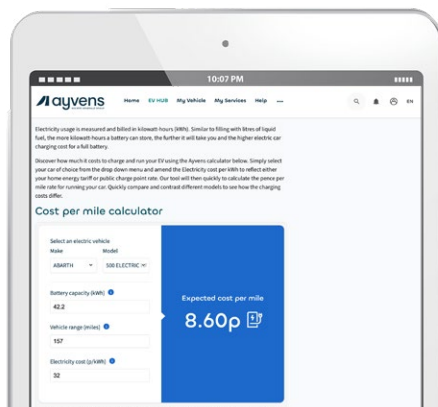
Is an electric car right for me?

Try it now



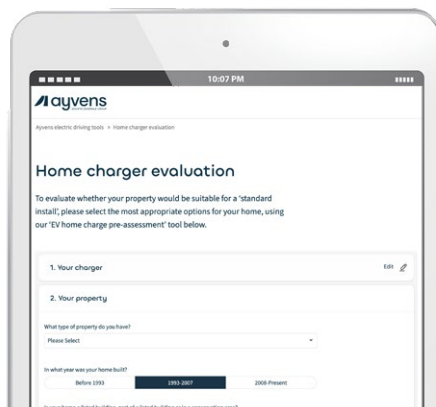
EV versus ICE comparator

Try it now



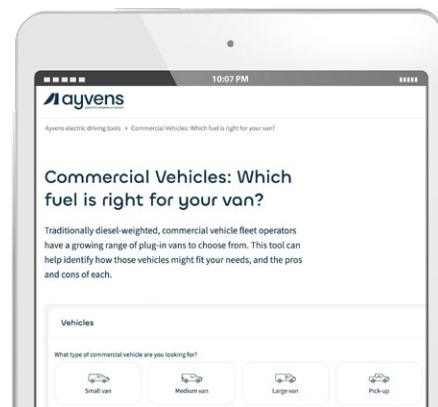
Cost per mile calculator

Try it now



Home chargepoint evaluation

Try it now



Which fuel is right for your van?

Try it now

Ten new cars to look out for in 2025

We've had many great new cars hit our roads in the past year, but what does 2025 have in store for us?

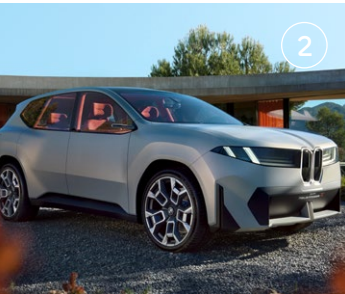


Alpine A290

Effectively a hot hatch version of the stylish new Renault 5 EV, the A290 produces up to 220bhp and reaches 62mph in 6.4 seconds from rest. It also offers gaming-inspired efficiency and performance coaching for drivers.

Ford Puma Gen-E

The UK's best-selling car will go electric in 2025. Adopting styling cues from the Mustang Mach-E, the Puma offers a 233-mile range, produces 167bhp and has loads of clever storage space on board. Pricing starts at £29,995.



BMW X3 Neue Klasse

BMW's new EV line-up launches with an X3-sized SUV, offering ultra-fast charging (186 miles in ten minutes) almost 400 miles of range and the ability to supply energy to appliances or the grid. A saloon (think 3 Series) will follow in 2026.

Honda Prelude

Reviving a product line last seen in the UK in 2001, the Prelude coupé is an important newcomer. It's showcasing Honda's latest full hybrid system, as a step towards a 100% battery-electric and hydrogen fuel cell by 2040.



Citroën C5 Aircross

Bigger than its predecessor and optimised to maximise the space on board, Citroën's futuristic-looking large SUV will be available with petrol, hybrid and battery-electric versions – which could offer a range of over 400 miles.

Hyundai Ioniq 9

An electric Range Rover sized SUV, the Ioniq 9 provides luxurious transport for six or seven occupants with seats that fully recline or rotate to face each other. It offers a range of up to 385 miles and can tow 2.5 tonnes.



Dacia Bigster

Positioned above the Duster, Dacia is claiming class-leading boot capacity and rear legroom for its largest SUV yet. The value-focused line-up launches with a choice of two and four-wheel petrol versions and a full hybrid.

Mercedes-Benz CLA

The new CLA saloon (and shooting brake that will follow) will include an electric version for the first time, efficiency-optimised to provide a range of 466 miles and with ultra-fast charging restoring 186 miles in ten minutes.



Fiat Grande Panda

The 'Panda' nameplate has always been synonymous with simplicity and value for money, and the new one extends those qualities to EVs. It's priced from €25,000 (£21,000) in Europe, and offers a range of 199 miles.

Volkswagen ID. 2all

Claimed to offer Golf-like space in a Polo-size footprint, the ID. 2all concept previews an electric hatchback with a target price under €25,000 (£21,000) and a range of 280 miles. There's a sporty GTI version in the works, too.





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