



Tire Speed Rating Tips for Drivers

Your safety and the handling of your vehicle depend on your tire's speed rating, or what we should think of as 'performance rating.' Here are a few tips to help you understand performance rating and the role it plays in keeping your tires on the ground.

1. You can always opt for better summer tires with a higher performance rating, but you should never downgrade.

Your vehicle handling and safety depends on driving with tires that match or exceed your original equipment specifications. That's because your vehicle's suspension has been engineered and calibrated to a specific performance rating. Engineers recommend a specific rating not for speed, but for optimal performance and safety.

Downgrading performance rating compromises your vehicle's handling in both everyday and emergency situations. The higher the performance rating, the safer the tire is.

2. You can downgrade in speed rating only with winter tires.

The only time it's OK to go down in rating is with your winter tires, where a 'Q' rating is acceptable because you're going to be driving slower and in cooler temperatures. If you drive a performance vehicle or you drive at high speeds and carry heavy loads, choose a winter tire with the recommended speed rating.

3. A tire's performance capability is sometimes lower than the performance rating indicates, so be wary when buying used tires.

When tires are tested for performance rating, they're new. Over time, though, a tire's capability and performance can degrade because of several factors, including age, inflation and damage. Once a tire has been repaired, its speed rating could be compromised depending on the condition. Without knowing a tire's history, buying used tires can be dangerous.

4. When you're shopping for new tires, check for speed rating and load index as well as size.

If it's time for new summer tires and you're doing some online research, make sure the tires you're considering match or exceed your vehicle manufacturer's OE specifications for speed rating and load index. You can find your recommended speed rating in the driver's manual.

You'll probably be able to find several tires that are the right size, but they might not have the speed rating you need. Installing the wrong speed-rated tires on your vehicle is a safety risk.

5. Make sure all four tires match the vehicle manufacturers OE specifications.

All four tires on a vehicle should be the same speed rating and load index as indicated by the vehicle's OE specifications. Don't mix and match or you are compromising safety and performance.