

# KNOW YOUR TYRES

Alongside oil, rubber is the most important component in your car, yet it is often misunderstood or neglected. Fuzz Townshend gets to grips with tyres

## ANATOMY OF THE TYRE

**1** This denotes the type of construction. On a radial tyre, the carcass cords beneath the tread run radially from tyre bead to tyre bead.

**2** Tyre size and profile. The figure '175' relates to the width of the tyre in millimetres, '65' is the profile of the tyre's sidewall as a percentage of the width, '14' is the diameter (in inches) of the rim the tyre can be fitted to.

**3** Load index. The maximum load a tyre can carry at the speed indicated by...

**4** T...its speed symbol – this one can be used at up to 118mph.

**5** Tyre-quality grading marks. Not used on UK tyres but may be seen on classics imported from the USA.

**6** Treadwear indicator locators. You won't see these locator marks on every tyre, but most will have them between the tyre treads. When the tyre wears to a critical level, the

indicators become level with the tread. When you see this happening it's time for a change of tyre.

**7** The country the tyre was made in.

**8** North American Department of Transport compliance symbol (usually seen on imports from the USA).

**9** North American tyre identification number (see above).

**10** Old type of tyre size designation incorporating speed symbol and...

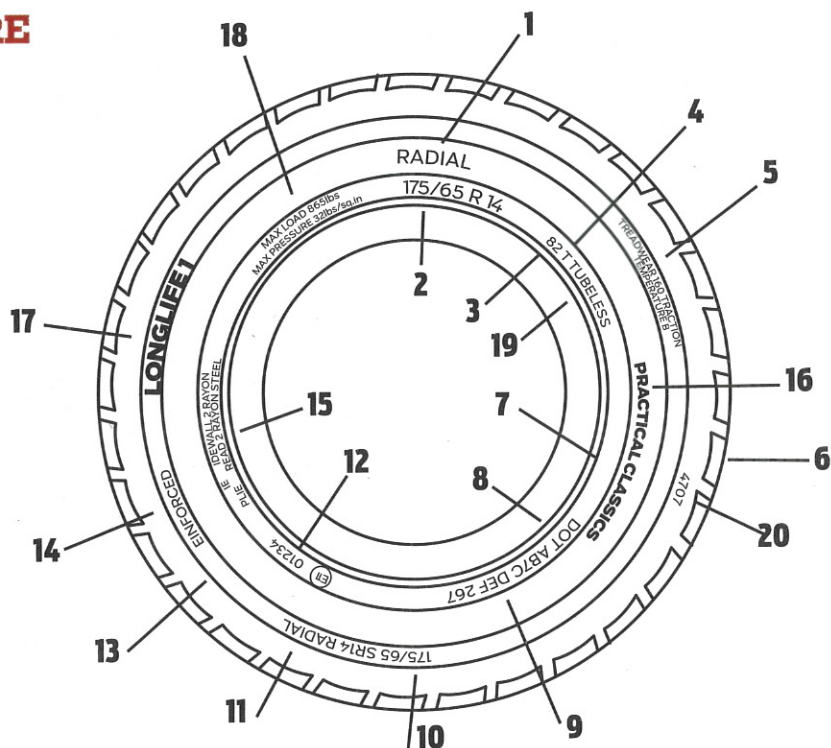
**11** ...tyre type..

**12** ECE type-approval mark.

**13** M&S stands for mud and snow – this tyre has a winter tread pattern.

**14** Indicates that the tyre is reinforced.

**15** Tyre construction details. These aren't required in the UK, so you're more likely to find them on imported classics.



**16** Manufacturer's identity.

**17** Tyre name.

**18** Load-pressure requirement. Not needed in the UK, but seen on classics coming in from abroad.

**19** Indicates that this tyre runs without an inner tube.

**20** Some tyres have a code to indicate the week number and year of manufacture – 4707 was made in week 47, 2007 (Nov 19-25).

TYRE SPEED SYMBOLS	
Symbol	Speed in mph
Q	100
R	105
S	113
T	118
H	130
V	150

## AGE

Old tyres are dangerous and must be replaced if the car to which they are fitted is to be driven. Any tyre over ten years old should be scrapped.

Avoid buying tyres that are over five years old, except in cases where the manufacturer guarantees its product is still viable after this amount of shelf life. Never go over the ten-year threshold.

## STORAGE

If the tyre has been stored correctly and still has a coating of mould release agent on its exterior, all should be well. But,

if it has been exposed to UV rays, or has been used, it will begin to deteriorate.

Reputable suppliers will store their tyres carefully, so generally speaking, tyres bought from them should be good for five years' use from the date of purchase up to a total tyre age of ten years.

Tyres bought elsewhere must be open to question, so if in doubt, the five-year rule from manufacture should apply. Buy the best you can afford.

## WEAR

Once fitted, tyre wear should be monitored, as this can show up

problems elsewhere on the car. Wear to the inside or outside of the tread could signify steering, suspension, wheel bearing, or subframe problems.

Patchy wear could mean that all is not well with the shock absorbers or suspension. Scrubbed inner sidewalls can reveal problems with wheel bearings, steering set-up, loose panels or components.

Scrubbed outer walls are usually the result of poor driving or under-inflation.

## PRESSURES

The correct tyre pressures are essential. Too low and the outer

edges of the tread area will wear before the centre. Too high and the centre will wear before the edges.

Any nicks in a tyre should be treated with suspicion, and any exposure of the tyre's inner construction components renders the unit good only for the recycling centre.

## TREAD DEPTH

Even though UK law states that the minimum tread depth of a tyre should be no less than 1.6mm, a minimum figure of 3mm is desirable, as beyond this, the tyre may not function correctly in wet conditions. ■