

Tactics for Maintaining Your Lease Car

If you have had a lease car before, you will probably know about recharges for excess wear and tear. Any damage which is beyond what the BVRLA deem to be normal wear, incurs a penalty recharge. Over the course of a few years any normal car is likely to pick up chips in windscreens, chips on the door edges, small dents on the body panels, scuffs on bumpers and wheels, and a whole host of other minor damage... unfortunately, very little of this is deemed to be fair wear and tear. A lease company doesn't make its money on the car it has leased to you until it had taken it back and sold it on. Obviously the more money they get for it at resale, the more profit for them, so ideally they want it back with low mileage and in tip-top condition. Effectively you are paying for the cost of devaluation in your standard lease payments, but if you damage the car and devalue it further, this will be charged back to you in the form of penalties. If you do incur damage, and every body does, it is usually cheaper to have the damage repaired yourself than to pay the penalties, but by far the best solution is to avoid the damage in the first place. Most of the damage you are likely to incur is actually avoidable with a little forethought and by breaking some of the bad habits and carelessness you have had in the past. Very little of the advice given here will come as any great surprise to you. The first thing to say is to keep your distance when driving. This will reduce the amount of stone chips you get (as well as being safer for everybody on the road including yourself). Try to avoid eating or drinking in your car, and whatever you do, never smoke in a lease car. This will avoid stains, cigarette burns and foul odours, all of which can incur penalties (huge penalties for smoking!). ...and that's pretty much all you have to do for day-to-day driving! Most of the damage your car picks up actually happens either when you are parked-up or in the process of parking, so choose your parking spaces carefully. Take a look at where you park at home and at work and see if they are really the most suitable. Try and park away from overhanging trees as these will result in your car collecting bird droppings and tree sap, both of which can permanently damage your paintwork. In high winds, acorns, conkers, twigs and branches can also fall on your car causing dents or scratches. You should also park away from places where people are going to walk around it or try to cross the road. For example, parking on the road opposite the entrance to a footpath, alleyway, youth club or community centre would be a really bad idea. Preferably you should park in an area with high visibility which is well lit, this will help avoid vandalism. When looking for places where you can park on a regular basis, look for obvious hazards such as concrete bollards, low walls and chain fences and high curbs. Sadly these kind of thing are often placed in such a way that you cannot see them when reversing, and yet they are just the right height to scuff bumpers or alloy wheels. Possibly the greatest parking hazards are found when you park on your own driveway or garage. If your driveway has overhanging bushes, cut them back, don't drive through them because they will scratch your paintwork. If you park in the garage, ensure it is free from obstructions. Have the kids keep their bikes in the shed, put the lawnmower there too because as careful as you try to be, sooner or later you will most likely have a mishap. If space in your garage is tight, then consider getting a bump-buster or some foam padding and fixing it to the walls so that you don't chip or door edges when getting in and out of your car. You may also want to make a mark on the wall which you can line up to so that you know just how far in to drive. Avoid car parks at all costs! This isn't as silly as it sounds; in fact it is quite easily done in this day and age. Probably the most dangerous place for a car is the supermarket car park where careless drivers can bump and scuff you, and then there are supermarket trolleys and people squeezing past carrying bags. This can all be avoided by doing your weekly shopping online this has an added advantage of helping you to stay within your mileage allowance. When you do have to go to the supermarket, try and go at a quiet time when there are less people about, and park in the far corner away from pedestrians and hopefully other cars. When parking in multi-storey car parks, find a quiet place near the top. Another time you should shop online or try to arrange delivery is at the D.I.Y. centre. Obviously there are people carelessly carrying stuff like planks of wood through the car park and the chances are that whatever you are buying has the potential to seriously damage your car. If you must go to the DIY centre (or garden centre) take old blankets and sheets in which to wrap cabinets and picture frames to prevent the hard edges ripping your upholstery, and take thick black bin liners in which to put tins of paint and varnish because they have a nasty habit of exploding inside hot cars. Finally, be aware that your new car is different from the old one, so there is no shame in re-learning to park and practicing a few times in a quiet road. You cannot get away with bumping low profile tires up and down high kerbs because scuffed alloy wheels are very expensive to repair. Despite all the care you take, accidents do and will happen. It's recommended that you put some money aside every month which you could use to pay for repairs, which will be cheaper than paying the recharges.

About the Author

Danny Argent is director of training and business development for a UK based [auto reconditioning company](#). Danny is also involved in a number of other projects designed to promote the car care industry and to provide car owners with the information they need to get the most from their cars. The latest project is an online tool for [managing mileage](#) to help drivers avoid excess mileage penalties.

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