

If Tire Labels Could Talk, Here's What They'd Say

There's a ton of information on your tires that tells you about how they work with your vehicle to affect its performance. Understanding the tire labels for your passenger vehicle or light truck is important for maintaining and buying new tires. If labels could talk, here's what they'd say:

R: The "R" stands for radial. Radial tires have been the industry standard for the past 20 years.

P or LT: The "P" indicates the tire is for passenger vehicles. "LT" indicates the tire is for light trucks.

NOMINAL WIDTH: This three-digit number gives the width of the tire in millimeters from sidewall edge to sidewall edge. The larger the number, the wider the tire.

MAXIMUM LOAD RATING: This number indicates the maximum load the tire can carry.

MAXIMUM PERMISSIBLE INFLATION PRESSURE: This number is the greatest amount of air pressure that should ever be put in the tire. This is NOT the same as the vehicle manufacturer's recommended tire pressure.

TEMPERATURE: The temperature rating indicates how well the tire resists heat.

ASPECT RATIO: This two-digit number gives the tire's ratio of height to width. A number of 50 or lower indicates a short sidewall for improved steering response and better overall handling.

TRACTION: The traction rating indicates the tire's ability to allow a car to stop on wet pavement in a shorter distance.

TREADWEAR: The treadwear rating indicates how long the tire should last. The higher the number, the longer it should take for the tires to wear down.

RIM DIAMETER CODE: This two-digit number is the wheel or rim diameter in inches.

LOAD INDEX: This two- or three-digit number is the tire's load index. It is an indicator of how much weight each tire can support. Note: You may not find this information on all tires because it is not required by law.

SPEED RATING: The speed rating tells you the maximum speed capability of a tire. The speed ratings include speeds from 99 mph to above 186 mph. Note: You may not find this information on all tires because it is not required by law.

M+S: This indicates that the tire has some mud and snow capability.

U.S. DOT TIRE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: This number begins with the letters "DOT" and indicates that the tire meets all Federal standards. The next two numbers or letters are the plant code where the tire was manufactured. The last four numbers represent the week and year the tire was built. For example, the numbers 3107 means the 31st week of 2007. The other numbers are marketing codes used at the manufacturer's discretion. This information is for contacting consumers if a tire defect requires a recall.





- As tires age, they are more prone to failure. Some vehicle and tire manufacturers recommend replacing tires that are six to 10 years old, regardless of treadwear. You can determine how old your tire is by looking on the sidewall for your DOT Tire Identification Number (TIN) . The last four digits of the TIN indicate the week and year the tire was made. If the TIN reads 0308 it was made in the third week of 2008.

Be aware of your spare

Spare tires on all vehicles are prone to aging because they seldom get replaced. Taking into account that tires degrade over time, NHTSA recommends that if your vehicle comes equipped with a full-size spare tire, that it not be used as a replacement for worn tires, except in emergencies such as replacing a flat tire.

Light Trucks

LT

The "LT" indicates the tire is for light trucks.

Max. Load Dual kg(lbs) at kPa(psi) Cold

This information indicates the maximum load and tire pressure when the tire is used as a dual, that is, when four tires are put on each rear axle (a total of six or more tires on the vehicle).

Max. Load Single kg(lbs) at kPa(psi) Cold

This information indicates the maximum load and tire pressure when the tire is used as a single.

Load Range

This information identifies the tire's load-carrying capabilities and its inflation limits.

