

Spare Tire 101: All You Need to Know

- [January 15, 2021](#)

In recent years, mainly to achieve better fuel economy, vehicle manufacturers have started ditching spare tires in newer vehicle models. However, does this mean that spare tires are becoming archaic? That we will fully replace them in the years to come? What actually are spare tires and why are they good or bad?

We will take a look at some of these questions today. Our main focus will be to give you a better look into the types of spares available on the tire market, their performing capabilities and what alternatives you can use without upgrading to a run flat or a self-sealing tire set.

Types of Spare Tires

Like everyone nowadays, even spare tires have different types, which perform and function in different ways. The two main spare tires types are **full size spares** and **temporary “donut” spares**.

So, what is the difference between these spare tire types?

Full Sized Spare Tires

Full sized spare tires are the same size as the tires mounted on your vehicle. It is basically a 5th tire you need to purchase when changing your tires. While this means you are spending extra money on an additional tire, it might be better in the long run.

The most important benefit of full sized spares is their performing capability. As they are an extra tire, the same size as the rest of the tires mounted on the vehicle, they will perform in the same manner. Using such a spare will not compromise the vehicle’s driving performance. Of course, the size of these tires is also their downside. Due to their size, these tires will take up greater space in the trunk when they are not in use. For vehicle’s with limited trunk space that might become an issue.

There are two types of full sized spare tires: matching and non-matching ones. The matching ones are identical to the ones mounted and these should be included in the tire rotations to ensure the tire set’s full-length usability. On the other hand, non-matching full sized spares feature a lightweight construction and the shallow tread in order to lower the tire’s weight. This will make the tire easier to install and to store, but it will compromise its performing capability.

Temporary or Donut Spare Tires

Temporary tires are smaller than the rest of the tires mounted on the vehicle. As a result, donut spares cannot perform in the same manner and have lessened durability. Due to their smaller size, mounting temporary spare tires on your vehicle in an emergency will limit you performing capability. However, their size makes donut spare tires easier to store in the trunk when they are not in use.

How Long Can You Drive on a Spare Tire?

The age-old question is: do donut tires perform in the same manner as full sized spare tires? The short answer is no. Donut tires are smaller than the rest of the tires mounted on the vehicle, which will hinder the vehicle's performing capability.

So how fast and for how long can donut tires be used? This is not just about Donut tires, but non-matching lightweight full sized spare tires are also included in this predicament. Both types of spare tires were designed and manufactured to safely get you to a service center. They were not meant to be driven on for long periods of time.

Basically, these tires have a speed and mileage limit that you should not exceed. These tires can be driven for 50-70 miles, depending on the brand you will purchase, and their highest speed limit is 50 mph. In other words, these tires will allow you to securely arrive at a nearby location where the damaged tire can be either repaired or replaced, but they will not give you the same levels of performing security as identical full sized spare tires will.

Furthermore, be prepared to compromise on handling when your vehicle has a donut or non-matching full sized spare tire mounted on it. With such tires it is recommended to take up a cautious driving style. Drivers with such spare tires on the vehicle need to drive slower and to avoid all unnecessary sharp steering, braking or cornering as the tires do not have the best traction.

No Spare Tire – No Problem #1

As we have stated before, some vehicle manufacturers have stopped adding spare tires to new models. So, what do they do to prepare drivers for unfortunate tire failures?

Run flat tires is one way new vehicle models are reinforced against accidental tire damage. These tires offer a limited, temporary performance once air pressure leaves the tires. In such cases, the run flat tire's structure withstands the weight of the vehicle and its passengers, ensuring the vehicle's 50 mile 50 mph performance

No Spare Tire – No Problem #2

However, the other newish invention vehicle manufacturers utilize is the Tire Repair Kit. This is basically a shoebox-sized repair kit which holds a small air compressor and an integrated sealant. This sealant will help you repair punctures in the tire. In order to properly use it, you must attach the kit to the valve stem of the tire. The kit will then fill up the tire's inside with the sealant, temporarily repairing the puncture, and it will reinflate the tire.

These tire repair kits are beneficial as they do not take up valuable trunk space and are easier to use – instead of having to mount a spare tire by yourself. The downside is a bit trickier. Tire Repair Kits will not work for sidewall damage or larger punctures, and they cannot be used if the tire comes off the rim. The biggest issue is that the debate whether the sealant can be cleaned out of the tire or not is still ongoing. This is not a permanent solution to the damage and some vehicle manufacturers argue that using the sealant on the damaged tire will make it unreparable. However, it is still a better solution than being stranded on the side of the road without anything to help you!