

Wheel Alignment - Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How important is wheel alignment?

A. Think of it this way. Research indicates that the average car is driven about 12,000 miles per year. A car with toe alignment just 0.34 degrees (Just 0.17 inches) out of specification has dragged its tyres sideways for more than 68 miles by the end of the year!

Q. What are the "symptoms" of a car that's out of alignment?

A. You should have your car checked:

If excessive or uneven tyre wear is found.

If there is a feeling of looseness or wandering.

If there is steering wheel vibration or shimmy.

After 10,000 miles or one year of driving

If your vehicle pulls to the left or right whilst driving straight

If you need to hold on to the steering wheel to drive straight

If the steering wheel is off centre when driving in a straight line

After changing a set of tyres

After a change of suspension or steering parts

After the first 2,000 miles (3,000 km) of driving a new car

After tran-axial repair on front wheel drive cars

Q. How often should I have my car aligned?

A. Follow the vehicle manufacturer's recommendation noted in your owner's manual.

But, as a general rule, have your vehicle's tyres checked every 10,000 miles or at least once a year.

Q. What is the difference between Tracking and Four Wheel Alignment?

A. Tracking is an across the axle check of total toe. With the tracking gauges touching the edge of the wheel rim the operator peers through a 'scope' or views a light/laser beam on a scale. With no allowance for run out compensation the reading taken will at best be approximate. So for tracking - we have one angle measured approximately. Four Wheel Alignment will give a minimum of 12 angles measured, all referenced to the car wheel centreline and displaying these alignment angles and comparing them to the factory alignment data. Allowance is made for wheel rim run-out. We have accurate repeatable reading that will allow the full picture of how the vehicle drives and whether undue tyre wear will occur. Adjustment would involve the steering wheel being set straight and adjusting the individual toe to maintain a straight steering wheel while the car is driven. On a modern car tracking alone will not result in a complete job or your complete satisfaction.

Q. My tyres are wearing a little on the inside edge and my steering wheel is not quite straight ahead. What might be the problem?

A. The first way forward on any car is to capture the current measurements for all the alignment angles - this will then give the complete answer and lead to the necessary diagnosis and subsequent adjustments. However as a general rule excessive toe-out will lead to premature inside edge wear - this will generally show on both tyres on that axle. The steering wheel not being straight is most likely caused by more adjustment having been made on one trackrod than the other - This 'fault' is common when tracking alone has been done.

Q. How much can I expect to pay for a Four Wheel Alignment?

A. Four Wheel Computerised Alignment - £70.50

This includes all adjustable front end settings to within manufacturers range

Q. Will my problem always be solved?

A. Usually but not always. Cars have wheel alignment difficulties through being both out of adjustment (correctable) or by having bent components or even the car body/subframe to which they bolt being bent. Where adjustments are not possible you will be kept informed .

Q. Does having worn tyres mean that the car can be aligned - or do I need to fit new tyres first?

A. New or old tyre fitted will make little difference to the alignment readings. They will however have a big effect on the way the car feels to drive (even after the alignment has been corrected). Where there was a high degree of misalignment and hence tyre wear present it would be recommended to have new tyres fitted at the time of the alignment adjustments are made.