

The LCA Winter Storage Preparation Checklist

Essential Steps for Classic Car Storage

Proper preparation is essential for protecting your classic car during winter storage. This comprehensive checklist ensures your vehicle remains in optimal condition throughout the off-season. Complete each step before placing your car into storage for best results.

1. Exterior Preparation

- ☐ Thoroughly wash and dry the entire vehicle, removing all dirt, salt, and road grime
- ☐ Clean wheel wells and undercarriage to remove trapped debris and moisture
- ☐ Apply quality car wax or paint sealant to protect the finish
- ☐ Inspect paintwork for stone chips or scratches and treat any exposed metal
- ☐ Clean and polish chrome trim, applying protective coating if needed
- ☐ Check all rubber seals (doors, windows, boot) for damage or deterioration

2. Mechanical & Fluid Management

Engine & Fluids

- ☐ Change engine oil and filter (old oil contains contaminants that cause corrosion)
- ☐ Top up all fluids: coolant, brake fluid, power steering fluid, screen wash
- ☐ Add fuel stabiliser to a full tank of petrol (prevents condensation and fuel degradation)
- ☐ Run engine for 10 minutes after adding stabiliser to circulate through fuel system
- ☐ Check coolant concentration is suitable for winter temperatures

Battery

- ☐ Clean battery terminals and check connections are tight
- ☐ Connect to a quality battery conditioner/trickle charger (essential for long-term storage)
- ☐ OR disconnect battery entirely and store in a warm, dry location

Tyres & Brakes

- ☐ Inflate tyres to maximum recommended pressure (prevents flat spots)
- ☐ Ideally, place vehicle on axle stands to completely remove weight from tyres
- ☐ DO NOT apply handbrake—use wheel chocks instead (prevents seized brake cables)

3. Interior Protection

- ☐ Vacuum thoroughly, removing all dirt, crumbs, and debris
- ☐ Clean and condition all leather surfaces with quality leather care products
- ☐ Wipe down all plastic, vinyl, and dashboard surfaces
- ☐ Remove all food items and perishables (attracts rodents)
- ☐ Place moisture absorber sachets inside cabin (silica gel or similar)
- ☐ Leave windows slightly open (5mm) if storing in dry, secure facility
- ☐ Close all windows fully if storing without climate control

4. Exhaust & Air Intake Protection

- ☐ Block exhaust outlets with steel wool or proper exhaust bungs (prevents rodent entry)
- ☐ Cover air intake if accessible (prevents debris and animal nesting)
- ☐ Ensure protection allows some air circulation (avoid completely sealing)

5. Documentation & Insurance

- ☐ Photograph the vehicle from all angles before storage
- ☐ Document mileage, date of storage, and any existing damage
- ☐ Notify insurance company of storage arrangement and location
- ☐ Keep copies of all maintenance receipts and storage agreements
- ☐ Record location of spare keys and any alarm/immobiliser codes

CRITICAL REMINDER

Even with perfect preparation, storing your classic car in a non-climate-controlled environment (home garage, outdoor cover, or unheated building) exposes it to 70-90% humidity levels during winter. This leads to rust formation, interior mould, and mechanical deterioration regardless of preparation quality. Professional climate-controlled storage maintaining 50-55% humidity is the only way to truly prevent winter damage. At £45 per week, it costs significantly less than the £10,000-£20,000 in repairs often required after a single winter of outdoor storage.

What NOT to Do

- ✗ DO NOT use car covers in humid environments** — they trap moisture and accelerate rust
- ✗ DO NOT start the engine periodically** — short running creates moisture in oil and exhaust
- ✗ DO NOT leave handbrake applied** — causes seized cables and stuck brake pads
- ✗ DO NOT assume your home garage is adequate** — without dehumidification, it's no better than outdoor storage

Lights Cars Action

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