



# How To Prepare Your VW for The Long Winter Nap

Most owners wait until cold and snowy weather to start thinking about winter storage for their favorite cars. However, some advance maintenance can prevent problems when the roads get salted down with frame-eating chemicals. A few simple and low cost preventative measures can save you hundreds of dollars next spring when it is time to once again enjoy the open road.

## Tis the Season

For many of us in the U.S. and around the world, the off season for our collector and hobby cars is growing near. Just like everyday driving “wear and tear,” storage or inactivity for any automobile brings a unique set of challenges that can be prevented or minimized through simple preparations and planning. Aging alone is a primary consideration but among others, the various mechanical, electronic, and hydraulic systems designed for regular use can degrade when idle for extended periods. Tires, suspension/drive train, fuel system, brakes, battery/electrical, interior fabrics and convertible top materials, paint and trim finish are all prone to deterioration. The good news is, we can prevent or delay these problems while we await the sunny weather and dry pavement.

## Tires

Let’s start with tires. They can age, weather and crack from exposure, and develop flat spots while motionless. Old tires may look good, but safety can be compromised from age alone. The best advice here is to wear them out every chance you get! Indoor storage is obviously most desirable but if your Air-Cooled VW is stored outdoors, a full car cover will protect tires from weather and sun exposure. Tires should be properly inflated at all times. Be sure to move your Volkswagen a few inches every week. There are also two schools of thought on prevention of flat spots: (1) Elevate your VW on jack stands or blocks to eliminate the potential for flat spots. Remember that it is important to block the vehicle in a manner that keeps at least most of the load on the suspension. Allowing the suspension and drive train to “hang” is quite unnatural and yields no benefit. (2) Leave your VW on the ground, while giving the tires more support. Our FlatStoppers are designed to support the radius of the tire evenly, thus preventing the development of a flat spot.



## Fuel System

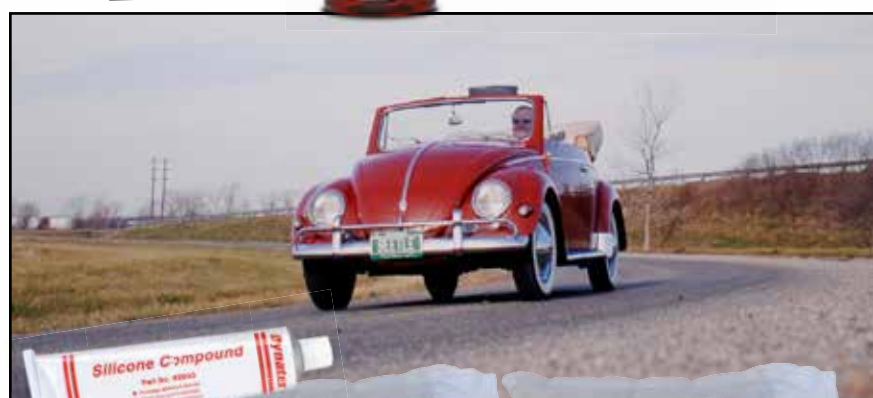
Fuels today aren’t like they were 50 years ago! Unfortunately, they age and degrade quickly. Store your car with a full tank to prevent condensation. You can also use Fuel Fresh to stabilize the gasoline and protect its chemical properties, so start up and your first cruise will be problem-free.

Don’t forget the Fuel System Cleaner! It’s a good measure of prevention for the initial shakedown next spring and will purge any moisture or other contaminants that may accumulate over winter. And once again, be sure to drive your VW at every opportunity to keep the fuel system flowing properly.



## Brakes

The brake and other hydraulic systems are pretty stable over the long term. However, inaction can cause rubber seals to adhere to the caliper bores or rotating shafts they isolate. Upon start-up, abrasion or tearing of the seal can result in weeping, leaks or pressure drops within the system. An occasional brief start up and allowing the Classic VW to warm up to operating temp – or even a simple pumping of the brake pedal – is a good measure, just to keep the systems limber. Of course a quick trip around the block in January won’t hurt anything!



## Interior Protection

Condensation or moisture, as well as mold/mildew, odors, and the resulting damage within the interior, are an unwelcome surprise when you revive your VW for the road. Always clean and condition your interior fabrics and materials, convertible top, etc. prior to storage. Make sure the interior is also dry, and use a product like our Sta-Dri Moisture Protection Kit to stabilize the environment in the interior until the cover comes off. Then drive your VW repeatedly to re-establish seat foam compression and steering wheel patina.



## Car Covers

While we’re on car covers, choose a cover to keep your VW snug and secure during hibernation. Clean, wax and detail the body for the big sleep and never apply a car cover to a dirty surface! Before storage, treat your weatherstrip and seals with our Silicone Preservative for a tight, friction free seal and extended life. We offer a variety of Volkswagen Covers for specific protection outdoors, ultra soft cotton flannel for indoors, colored, form-fitting styles to showcase what’s beneath or thicker multi-layered fabrics that prevent the potential for a scratch or ding until we can all get back on the road.




## Battery

Battery life and performance have limitations from day one. Parasitic draw from the clock or various memory systems in the electronics can – and will – drain the battery over time. The most obvious way to isolate the battery from this draw is disconnection or removal. We offer several types of convenient Battery Switches that also serve well as a theft or vandal deterrent. The trouble I’ve experienced with disconnection is electrical failures at start up after leaving a car “dead” over an extended period of time.

A better alternative is a “trickle charger” type of device that will maintain the proper battery voltage to ensure all systems are go at any time. Our simple on board style battery charger/maintainer is an excellent option. As always, take every opportunity to drive and enjoy your Volkswagen to keep the battery fully charged. Starting to see a recurring theme here?

Winter weather means less time behind the wheel, but you don’t have to put your passion on hold until the roads are clear. This is a great time to grab a book and learn more about our favorite car: The People’s Car!



Hugs,  
  
 Mike



## Share the Knowledge

If you’ve found this article helpful, and would like to take advantage of more knowledge and practical advice from a community of restorers, journalists and enthusiasts, please [visit our “Share the Knowledge” section](#) on the Mid America Motorworks VW website.