

HOW TO READ CAR TYRES BEFORE BUYING

BY STELLA NAGINDO

Experts say many motorists do not know the importance of the writings on their tyres.

Saleem Mareesa, the sales manager of Tyre Express in Kampala, says each writing on a tyre has a meaning.

Mareesa says it is vital to know what each writing means so as to know the right tyre to buy for your car, purpose, road condition, climate or weather.

This, he explained, is more profound in temperate countries with varying and adverse weather conditions. You cannot use the same tyre for summer and winter, he elaborated.

Mareesa added that the writings help one understand how much to inflate the tyres, how much weight the tyres can carry, the width, length and radius of the tyre, the year of manufacture and the expiry date among other things.

Meanings

1 PR or ply rating (strength of tyre)

According to Mareesa, this writing shows the ply rating of the tyre. The ply indicates the strength of the tyre. The higher the ply, the tougher the tyre. The ply rating can vary



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to the height (70) and the radius (R) or rim size, which in

time to look for the rating table, Namuddu explains.



'Tubeless' means a tyre does not need a tube to function

tyre can carry is also indicated near the pressure label. The weight label usually appears as 'max load 200kg'. These ratings change depending on the size, type of tyre and manufacture," Kaylira says.

Rotating tyres

You should rotate tyres once every six months or after 6,000 miles, whichever comes first.

Rotation means that you remove and fit the tyre in a different position to make them wear out evenly, Kaylira says.

How you rotate the tyres depends on the driving method, how the tyres are wearing out (look at the tyres to see) and the drive system of the car. The car could have a front-wheel-drive, rear-wheel drive or a 4WD system. Rotating tyres is also determined by whether or not the tyres are rotational/

Directional tyres are those which have a specific direction in which they rotate. These must be fitted on the rim in a specific way to rotate correctly.

• Front-wheel-drive

Front-wheel-drive cars are the commonest in Uganda, Kaylira pointed out.

Move the front tyres to the rear on the same side and move the rear tyres to the front, but switch their sides — the one that was on the left should go to the right and vice-versa.

• Rear-wheel-drive

Most pick-ups and trucks are rear-wheel-drive, so are most Toyota Hiace taxis. For such vehicles, move the front tyres to the rear, but switch their sides. Move the rear tyres to the front, but fit them on the same side.

• Four-wheel-drive

Move the front tyres to the rear and switch their sides and move the rear tyres to front, but fit them on the same side.

• Directional tyres

Move the tyres without changing their sides. The front ones go behind and the rear ones come in front, but on the same side. However, if a tyre is bad for the front, remove it and buy a new one, do not switch it to the rear.

NOISE

Tyres also have noise regulations written on them.

The amount of noise a tyre makes on the road is regulated to protect the driver from it and failure to hear what is going on around them, Saleem Mareesa, the sales manager of Tyre Express in Kampala, noted.

From October 2011, the European Union started enforcing the regulation to limit tyre noise. Those which comply carry the letter S at the end of a series of numbers other than those showing the tyre size. For example, if you see 44 0228997-S, the S shows that this tyre is safe in terms of noise pollution, Mareesa said.

depending on the size of the tyre. For example, it can be PR-6, 8, 12, 16 and goes up to 28.

2 Steel Radial (material used in tyre)

Mareesa notes that the Steel Radial writing on a tyre shows that the tyre has steel/wires in it. This communicates the type of materials that were used to make the tyre.

3 Tubeless

"This means that the tyre does not require a tube for it to perform," Mareesa explains.

Naira Namuddu, the vice-chairperson of the Tyre Dealers Association and manager of SMK Tyres, notes that most tyres have writings that show what type of cars they are supposed to go on.

A writing such as C means that such a tyre can be used on a light commercial vehicle such as a taxi, van, wagon or pickup.

4 Height/width/radius/speed

Namuddu says writings like 205/70/R14 show the width (205mm), the ratio of the width

this case, is 14 inches.

5 Speed

The speed rating is indicated as a letter after the writing. For example, in 205/70/R14-W, the W indicates the top speed the tyre can handle. You have to look at the speed rating table (see graphic below) to know that W allows you up to 270km/h.

Some tyres have the maximum speed written down (for example 270km/h) instead of being represented by a letter. This saves the driver the



Tyre writings should never be ignored

6 Pressure

Moses Kayiira, a mechanic at Bakayiira Diesel Garage in Makindye, Kampala says all tyres show the maximum pressure they can withstand on the tyre wall or on the driver's door sticker.

"This is indicated as, for example, 350kpa," Kayiira says.

He notes that some motorists put too much or little tyre pressure, which makes driving hard and dangerous.

"When the pressure is high, the tyre's lifespan is reduced. The car bounces off the road, is uncomfortable and hard to control. When the pressure is too low, the car drags and uses a lot of fuel and the tyre walls get damaged. The rim can also easily get damaged if you hit a hard surface because its cushion is greatly reduced. To avoid all this, the tyre must be inflated according to the manufacturer's recommendation," Kayiira notes.

7 Weight

"The maximum weight the

Tyre speed ratings

Speed Rating	Kilometers/Hour	Speed Rating	Kilometers/Hour
N	140	U	200
P	150	H	210
Q	160	V	240
R	170	Z	240+
S	180	W	270
T	190	Y	300