



The Ultimate Guide to Winter Tires



When our weather gets cold and the snow starts to fall, Canadian streets and highways can become difficult to navigate. To stay safe while driving, you need the traction and durability that only a set of quality winter tires can provide. And, once you have those winter tires, you need to properly care for them both when they're in use and when they're stored to ensure they're in great shape for as many seasons as possible.

Whether you're a first time vehicle owner who is gearing up for winter, or you're simply looking for a refresher, this guide will help you choose the perfect winter tires. The experts at Tirecraft have provided their best advice on the importance of winter tires, how to choose the set that's right for you, and how to properly store them when not in use.



Why Choosing Winter Tires Over All Season Tires is Important?

You may think, based on the name alone, that a set of all season tires should be able to get you where you need to go all year round. While this may be true in milder climates, drivers in Canada should always have a set of winter tires for the colder months. In fact, in Quebec, drivers are required to install winter tires on their vehicles between December 15 and March 15. Some parts of British Columbia also require winter tires between October 1 and March 31. Regulations and recommendations vary by province and territory. To be sure of the rules in your area, check the local guidelines.

The reason winter tires are a smarter choice than all season tires for winter comes down to construction. Winter tires are built using rubber compounds that are designed to excel in conditions that are snowy, icy, and cold. With these dense rubber compounds, winter tires are able to stay malleable and continue to provide strong grip and maneuverability when the temperature drops. Alternatively, all season tires use compounds that emphasize compromise, meaning they don't excel in any specific season. These compounds also cause all season tires to harden in colder temperatures. When all season tires harden in cold weather, they struggle to maintain traction, making turning, accelerating, and braking more difficult.

Simply put, we always recommend choosing winter tires over all season tires for the winter. They are designed specifically with winter weather in mind, and in Quebec—where they are mandatory—they have been shown to **reduce accidents that cause injury by 36%** during these chilly months.

When Should I Switch Over to Winter Tires?

As a general rule, we recommend that you change over to your winter tires when the temperature begins to fall below 7°C. This is because winter tires are designed to thrive in temperatures below 7°C, while all season tires are not. By installing your winter tires when the temperature begins to dip below 7°C (and not after the first snowfall of the season), you'll maintain the best grip possible on the road, allowing you to maintain better control of your vehicle.

Winter Tire Treads - What You Need to Know

Winter tire treads are built with distinctive tread patterns that grip and disperse snow while driving. These designs help make it possible for drivers to accelerate, grip, turn, and brake while driving in winter weather.

Understanding Tread Depth

The tread depth on your winter tire is a measurement of the amount of space between the tire's deepest grooves and the top of its tread rubber. As you drive on your tires, their treads will wear. As treads wear, you will begin to experience diminished traction and grip, and eventually your tires will need to be replaced. Because of this, it's important to pay close attention to your tire's treads if you plan on using them over multiple winters. Typically, winter tire treads remain effective between **20,000km and 25,000km** of driving, but this number can vary based on conditions. The easiest way to ensure your tires are road-worthy is by measuring your tire's tread depth. These measurements can quickly be taken by the experts at your local Tirecraft when you come in to change over your tires.



The Quarter Test

If you'd rather measure your own tire tread depth, there is a simple test you can conduct at home to ensure your tires are road worthy. It's called "The Quarter Test."

To conduct the quarter test, all you need is a quarter and your winter tires. Turn the quarter so the caribou is facing down, then insert the quarter into one of the grooves on your tire. If the entirety of the caribou's face is covered, your treads are ready for another winter. However, if you can see the tip of the caribou's nose, that means your tread depth is low, and we would recommend you choose a new set of winter tires.

Keep an Eye on Tire Inflation

During the winter months, it's normal to experience a loss in tire pressure. This is because cold air causes air molecules to contract. The result is a reduction in overall volume which reduces pressure. Low tire pressure can effect everything from your gas mileage, to your braking time and your overall tread life. It can even cause total tire failure and blowouts, which is the last thing you want when you're driving in the winter. Regularly checking your tire pressure can help ensure they are in the best shape possible while you're driving.

Checking your tire pressure is a simple process. All you need is an air pressure gauge and a few minutes.

Step 1 Check the recommended cold tire inflation pressure for your tires. This can easily be found on your tire's sidewall.

Step 2 Unscrew your tire's valve stem cap and connect your air pressure gauge directly to the valve stem.

Step 3 Record your tire pressure reading.

Step 4 Reattach the tire's valve stem cap.

Step 5 Repeat this process with each of your tires.



Air pressure dispensers can be located at many Tirecraft locations. If you find yourself in need of increased tire pressure, stop by your local Tirecraft and we can help.

Four Things to Keep in Mind When Choosing a Set of Winter Tires

Make Sure the Tires You Want are Right for Your Vehicle

Tire sizes vary, so it's important that you choose a winter tire that will properly fit your vehicle. Luckily, this information is very easy to find. Your vehicle's tire sizing requirements can be found on an information label that is typically located on the driver's side door frame. As for tires, their sizes are displayed on their sidewall.

Once you know the size of the tires that fit on your vehicle, you can begin narrowing down your search to find the best options for you. Regardless of the season, you should never install tires that are not the correct size on your vehicle. Doing so can result in an unstable, bumpy driving experience, as well as impact your vehicle's handling ability.

Always Purchase and Install Your Winter Tires in Sets of Four

There's a common misconception that you can "get away" with only putting two winter tires on your vehicle alongside two all season tires during the winter months. Because winter tires and all season tires are designed using different compounds, they wear and react differently to changing weather. Installing two different sets of tires on your vehicle at the same time can impact the quality and comfort of your ride, as well as your braking, accelerating, and handling capabilities. Because of this, we always recommend that you choose a set of four winter tires and install them all at the same time. Doing this will help ensure a consistent driving experience during the winter months.

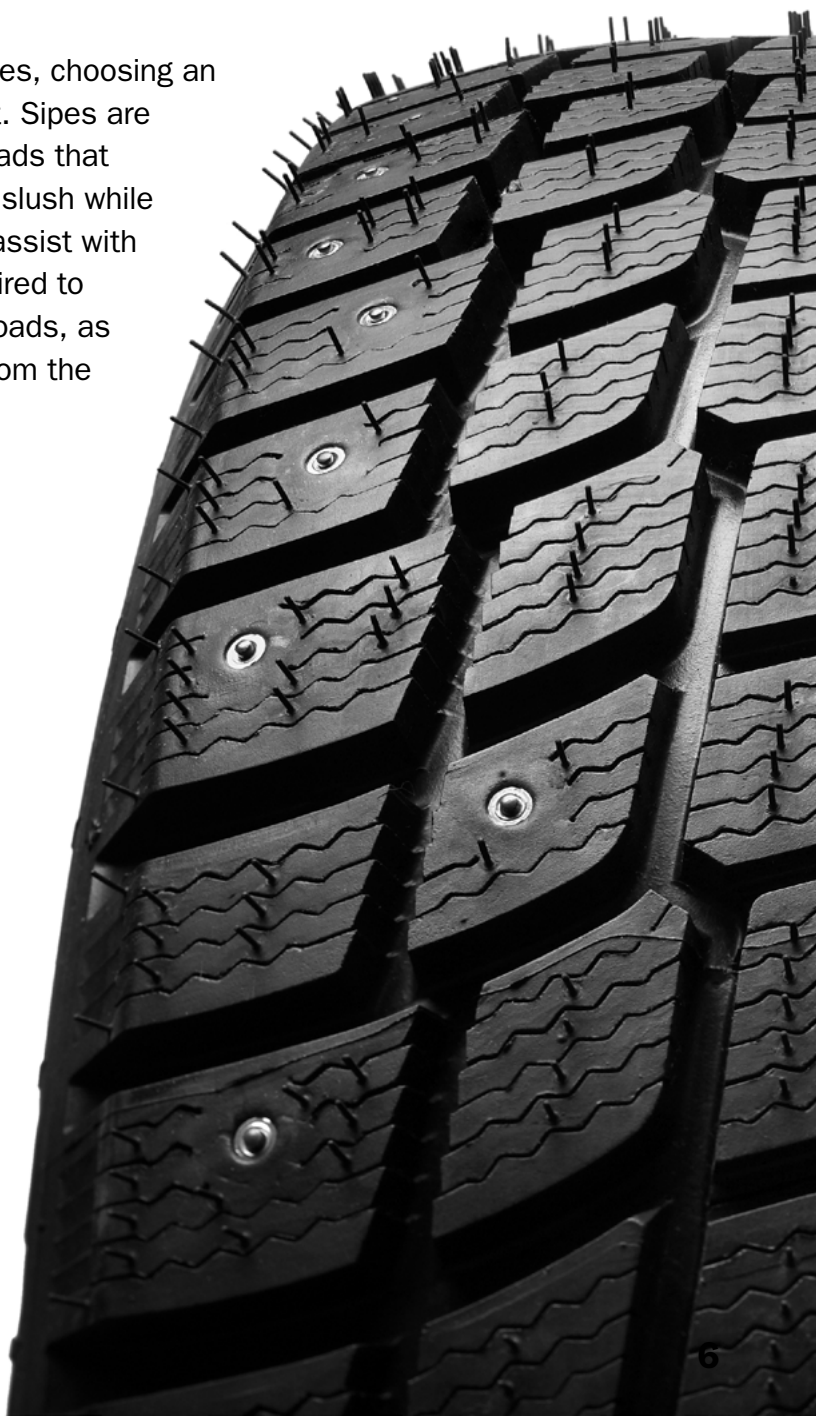


Look for a Directional Tread Design

Directional tread designs allow your winter tires to effectively evacuate water, slush, snow, and ice on the road's surface. This is due to the large, V-shaped patterns that are typically found on these treads, as well as the large grooves between the tread blocks. By choosing a set of winter tires with a directional tread design, you'll experience improved handling while driving in winter conditions.

The Importance of Sipes

When it comes to winter tires, choosing an option with sipes is a must. Sipes are small slits in winter tire treads that help to disperse snow and slush while driving. In doing so, sipes assist with reducing the distance required to successfully brake on icy roads, as well as with acceleration from the stop position.



Can I Use Studded Tires?

Studded tires are legal in Canada, though they do have some restrictions placed upon them on a province-by-province basis.

British Columbia Tires with studs of up to 3.5mm are allowed between October 1 and April 30. For vehicles 10,000lbs or less, the total number of studs you can have on your tires is 130. Additionally, vehicles with studded tires in the front are required to have winter tires on the rear as well.

Manitoba Studded tires are legal between October 1 and April 30.

Ontario Studded tires are legal in Northern Ontario between September 1 and May 31. Additionally, drivers travelling from outside of Ontario are legally allowed to travel within the province for one month on Scandinavian-made lightweight studs.

Quebec Studded tires are allowed between October 15 and May 1 as long as are used on both ends of the axle.

New Brunswick Studded tires are legal between October 15 and May 31.

Nova Scotia Studded tires no longer than 1/8 of an inch from the base of the tire and with a diameter of more than 1/2 an inch are legal between October 15 and May 31.

Prince Edward Island Studded tires are legal between October 1 and May 31.

Newfoundland and Labrador Studded tires are legal between October 31 and May 1.

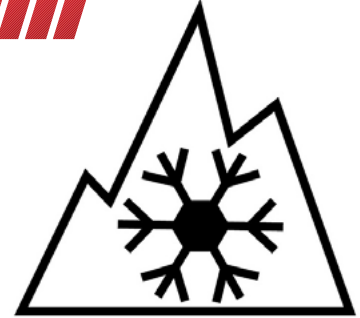
Alberta, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and the Yukon have no restrictions on studded tires.



Look for the Severe Service Winter Tire Designation

To meet the Tire and Rubber Association of Canada winter traction performance requirements, winter tires must provide drivers with traction that can meet the challenges of the Canadian climate. If a tire meets these requirements, it will have the Severe Service Winter Tire designation.

This designation is indicated by a symbol that resembles a snowflake in front of three mountain peaks. Typically, this symbol will be featured on the sidewall of your tire. When you choose a set of tires that meet the Rubber Association of Canada's requirements, you can be confident that they'll be able to handle winter driving in the great white north.



What About Mud & Snow Tires?

Tires that feature an M+S, M/S, M&S, MS symbol on their sidewall are all season tires that can be used in mud and snow. While these tires are able to provide drivers with traction in light snow, they are still all season tires, and as such we would not recommend using them throughout the winter months.

Choose a Brand That You Trust

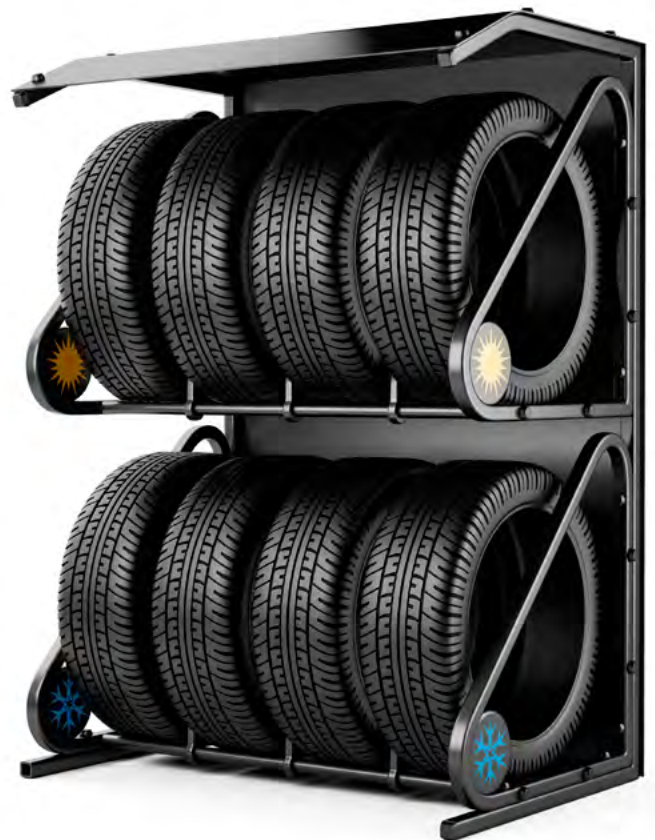
Winter tires keep your vehicle safe and on the road in adverse driving conditions, so it's important to choose a set from a brand name you can trust. When you choose a set of winter tires from a well known brand, you can rest assured that that they are high quality. Many of these brands offer limited tread wear warranties on their tires, as well as protection against defects. Some even offer money back guarantees, so if you're not happy with your choice of tires, you can return them for a refund.

How to Store Your Winter Tires When Not in Use

It's important to take proper care of your winter tires even when they're not installed on your vehicle—especially if you want them to last. In order to help ensure your tires will keep you safe on the road across multiple winters, we recommend:

- Thoroughly cleaning your tires before storing them to remove built up gunk and grime
- Storing your tires in a room that is completely protected from direct sunlight and the elements
- Storing your tires in a room that is cool and dark
- Ensuring your tires will not come into contact with any liquids while in storage
- Eliminating any sources of external pressure or tension that may cause them to crack

Ideally, you should store your tires on a rack. If that's not possible, you can stack them in a pile. If tires are stacked they should be rotated every four weeks. This will ensure equal pressure between your tires.



**Now That You Have the Facts,
it's Time to Talk to the Experts!**

Canadian winters can be harsh, so let Tirecraft help you prepare! We are more than happy to answer any questions you may have, and stock winter tires from many of the top brands in the industry, including:

BF Goodrich
Tires

BRIDGESTONE
Your Journey, Our Passion

Continental

COOPERTIRES

DUNLOP
TIRES

Firestone

GENERAL TIRE

GOODYEAR

GT RADIAL

Hankook

MICHELIN

PIRELLI

TOYO TIRES

UNIROYAL

YOKOHAMA

In addition, certain Tirecraft locations offer storage services for your tires. **Find your perfect set of winter tires today, or stop by your local Tirecraft to find the perfect winter tires for you!**

Find a Dealer

