

# Rules for Snow Shoveling

## 1. Stretch first

Don't be in a hurry to get outside. Stretch thoroughly using the same sorts of moves that runners, mountain bikers and other athletes use. Stretch your hamstrings, stretch your back, and stretch your shoulders. Then dress in removable layers, grab your shovel and resist the urge to [fly](#) at the white stuff just to get the job done. Pace yourself. Start slowly and ramp up to speed.

## 2. Don't move snow twice

Before you even take your first scoop, decide where you're going to dump the snow. Drop the first shovelful farther away from where you are standing, then dump remaining snow closer and closer to where you are. That way, the last scoops that you shovel are moved the shortest distance. Don't block access to snow that needs to be removed by piling it up in a way that will force you to move it twice.

## 3. Move snow the shortest distance possible

Consider that everything from a driveway to a patio to a walkway is really a rectangle, and rectangles have a center point. Move the snow from the center of the rectangle to the nearest edge.

## 4. Clear cars first

Brush snow off [cars](#) then clear around the cars.

## 5. Do the foreground then the background

For example, to clear snow from a rectangle, first shovel a strip clear along the perimeter of the rectangle. Then, moving from the center to the edge, push the snow into the cleared area. Next, lift and throw the snow out of the area.

## 6. Maintain proper posture:

- A. Use your leg muscles as much as possible - push snow when you can and use your legs to lift when you can't push it.
- B. Keep your back straight as you move from the squat position to the upright position.
- C. Use your shoulder muscles as much as possible.
- D. Hold the snow shovel as close to your upper body as possible.
- E. Keep one hand close to the shovel blade for better leverage.
- F. Don't twist your upper body as you throw snow.

## 7. Keep hydrated

Take bottles of water out with you and keep them accessible, either in the [car](#) or on the front stoop or somewhere else convenient.

## 8. Rest frequently

Clearing an area by hand means that you may lift and carry anywhere from hundreds of pounds to tons of snow.

## 9. Be thorough but not fussy

The sun is relatively strong this time of year. Clear an area, spread de-icer if necessary and then let the sun do the rest. The fact is, any surface color that you expose in shoveling (gray, green, brown or black) will be far less reflective than a thick blanket of snow, and remaining snow will melt more easily from that darker surface.

## **10. Don't overdress**

You need to stay warm, but if you overdress you're going to be soaked in sweat in no time. Dress in loose-fitting layers that you can peel off as you heat up.

## **11. Whenever possible, team up**

Shoveling with a friend or neighbor is inherently more enjoyable than shoveling on your own. Plus, it's quicker to get the job done with two or three sets of hands.

## **12. Go easy on the de-icer**

Once the area is clear, all you need is a thin scattering of de-icer to keep it that way. If you're scattering by hand, throw the salt, pellets or granules low along the ground so they bounce and roll into a uniform layer.

## **13. Whenever possible, get a head start**

It's easier to remove snow in thin layers than wait until all the snow is down to have at it. If it looks like your area is going to get dumped on, try to get out there and shovel it in several passes.

## **14. Maintain your equipment**

The front edge of a snow shovel takes a beating. If it's metal, hammer it straight when it gets bent; if it's plastic use a utility knife to carve off the burr that forms on its end. Tighten a loose handle by driving a large hex head sheet metal screw through the blade socket and into the handle.

## **15. Stretch when you're done**

Stretch gently when you're done and use an ice pack and ibuprofen to take care of inflamed muscles. Rest and remain hydrated.

## **How to Use a Snow Thrower**

In case all that stretching sounds like too much work, here are some tips for using a snow-throwing machine.

1. Test run the machine before the storm.
2. Keep necessary spare parts on hand: drive belts, spark plugs and shear pins.
3. Keep a wire brush, a scrap piece of wood and spray de-icer handy. You may well need any number of tools to keep the machine's auger and other moving parts cleared of ice and compacted snow. Never clear a clogged auger with the engine running.
4. Don't forget the newspaper that's been thrown into the driveway or onto the sidewalk. A frozen newspaper can clog a snow thrower like nobody's business. If you spot the [paper](#) or circular's outline under the snow when you come home (let's say) just remember to go out there and pick it up.
5. Keep a can of spray lubricant handy. Moving parts that worked fine in the garage can suddenly get cranky when exposed to cold, wet conditions.

## Driving in Snow and Ice

The best advice for driving in bad winter weather is not to drive at all, if you can avoid it.

Don't go out until the snow plows and sanding trucks have had a chance to do their work, and allow yourself extra time to reach your destination.

If you must drive in snowy conditions, make sure your car is prepared, and that you know how to handle road conditions.

It's helpful to practice winter driving techniques in a snowy, open parking lot, so you're familiar with how your car handles. Consult your owner's manual for tips specific to your vehicle.

### Driving safely on icy roads

1. Decrease your speed and leave yourself plenty of room to stop. You should allow at least three times more space than usual between you and the car in front of you.
2. Brake gently to avoid skidding. If your wheels start to lock up, ease off the brake.
3. Turn on your lights to increase your visibility to other motorists.
4. Keep your lights and windshield clean.
5. Use low gears to keep traction, especially on hills.
6. Don't use cruise control or overdrive on icy roads.
7. Be especially careful on bridges, overpasses and infrequently traveled roads, which will freeze first. Even at temperatures above freezing, if the conditions are wet, you might encounter ice in shady areas or on exposed roadways like bridges.
8. Don't pass snow plows and sanding trucks. The drivers have limited visibility, and you're likely to find the road in front of them worse than the road behind.
9. Don't assume your vehicle can handle all conditions. Even four-wheel and front-wheel drive vehicles can encounter trouble on winter roads.

### If your rear wheels skid...

1. Take your foot off the accelerator.
2. Steer in the direction you want the front wheels to go. If your rear wheels are sliding left, steer left. If they're sliding right, steer right.
3. If your rear wheels start sliding the other way as you recover, ease the steering wheel toward that side. You might have to steer left and right a few times to get your vehicle completely under control.
4. If you have standard brakes, pump them gently.
5. If you have anti-lock brakes (ABS), do not pump the brakes. Apply steady pressure to the brakes. You will feel the brakes pulse — this is normal.

### If your front wheels skid...

1. Take your foot off the gas and shift to neutral, but don't try to steer immediately.
2. As the wheels skid sideways, they will slow the vehicle and traction will return. As it does, steer in the direction you want to go. Then put the transmission in "drive" or release the clutch, and accelerate gently.

### If you get stuck...

1. Do not spin your wheels. This will only dig you in deeper.
2. Turn your wheels from side to side a few times to push snow out of the way.
3. Use a light touch on the gas, to ease your car out.
4. Use a shovel to clear snow away from the wheels and the underside of the car.
5. Pour sand, kitty litter, gravel or salt in the path of the wheels, to help get traction.
6. Try rocking the vehicle. (Check your owner's manual first — it can damage the transmission on some vehicles.) Shift from forward to reverse, and back again. Each time you're in gear, give a light touch on the gas until the vehicle gets going.

## Winterize Your Car

Driving in the winter means snow, sleet and ice that can lead to slower traffic, hazardous road conditions, hot tempers and unforeseen dangers. To help you make it safely through winter, here are some suggestions from the National Safety Council to make sure that you and your vehicle are prepared.

### Weather

At any temperature -- 20° Fahrenheit below zero or 90° Fahrenheit above -- weather affects road and driving conditions and can pose serious problems. It is important to monitor forecasts on the Web, radio, TV, cable weather channel, or in the daily papers.

### Your Car

Prepare your car for winter. Start with a checkup that includes:

- Checking the ignition, brakes, wiring, hoses and fan belts.
- Changing and adjusting the spark plugs.
- Checking the air, fuel and emission filters, and the PCV valve.
- Inspecting the distributor.
- Checking the battery.
- Checking the tires for air, sidewall wear and tread depth.
- Checking antifreeze levels and the freeze line.

Your car should have a tune-up (check the owner's manual for the recommended interval) to ensure better gas mileage, quicker starts and faster response on pick-up and passing power.

### Necessary Equipment

An emergency situation on the road can arise at any time and you must be prepared. In addition to making sure you have the tune-up, a full tank of gas, and fresh anti-freeze, you should carry the following items in your trunk:

- Properly inflated spare tire, wheel wrench and tripod-type jack
- Shovel
- Jumper cables
- Tow and tire chains
- Bag of salt or cat litter
- Tool kit

### Essential Supplies

Be prepared with a "survival kit" that should always remain in the car. Replenish after use. Essential supplies include:

- Working flashlight and extra batteries
- Reflective triangles and brightly-colored cloth
- Compass
- First aid kit
- Exterior windshield cleaner
- Ice scraper and snow brush
- Wooden stick matches in a waterproof container
- Scissors and string/cord
- Non-perishable, high-energy foods like unsalted canned nuts, dried fruits, and hard candy.

In addition, if you are driving long distances under cold, snowy, and icy conditions, you should also carry supplies to keep you warm such as heavy woolen mittens, socks, a cap and blankets.

### If You Become Stranded...

- Do not leave your car unless you know exactly where you are, how far it is to possible help, and are certain you will improve your situation.
- To attract attention, light two flares and place one at each end of the car a safe distance away. Hang a brightly colored cloth from your antenna.
- If you are sure the car's exhaust pipe is not blocked, run the engine and heater for about 10 minutes every hour or so depending upon the amount of gas in the tank.
- To protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia use the woolen items and blankets to keep warm.
- Keep at least one window open slightly. Heavy snow and ice can seal a car shut.
- Eat a hard candy to keep your mouth moist.