

Tips/Items Suggested for Carry by Police Officers - based on Walt Brinker's 2000+ Roadside Assists

For flat tires (about 75 percent of my assists are for tire issues; 80 percent of those include a spare tire which is flat or too low on air to be driven safely) – with approximate cost:

- Old beach towel folded several times to pad your knees, and spread out for while on the ground positioning vehicle jack or removing or replacing wheels – to protect uniform from being soiled. \$0
- Knee pads with Velcro buckles: protects knees from sharp rocks; also prevents trousers from getting dirty and worn. \$12
- Cheap tarp for use with, or in lieu of, beach towel when ground is wet. \$15
- Hydraulic jack for low profile cars and other vehicles (“NASCAR jack”): Recommend Craftsman 2 ½ Ton model 50165. \$63
NOTE: This relatively small hydraulic jack greatly reduces time to jack up any small to medium-sized vehicle (all sedans & minivans). Patrol car trunks have limited space, but this item deserves special consideration.
- Mandatory for this jack: stiff, smooth surfaces for its wheels to roll on: 22-gauge steel strips for low vehicles; two pieces of lumber 2”X12”X30” for higher vehicles – for smooth surface and greater elevation. \$5
- Heavy Duty telescoping jack set for large pickups and vans; includes segmented shaft and lug wrench/crank. Chevrolet jack is best. NOTE: This jack is actually very small and compact considering its capability. \$135
- Jack stand. Sometimes the jack-up needs to proceed in stages when initial jack-up does not finish the job and jack needs to be repositioned to a better lift point. A jack stand can retain vehicle elevation while jack is repositioned. \$25
- Piece of treated plywood board 8” X 8”X 1/2” thick to place under vehicle pickup/van jack to redistribute the vehicle’s weight on soft ground or sand - to stabilize the jack and prevent it from sinking, especially when the ground is wet or uneven. Recommended: Have about 20 such pieces to: 1) shore up 2”X12”X30” lumber to ensure vertical jack-ups when ground is uneven, and 2) improvise a ramp to facilitate trailer tire changes. \$5
- Tire pressure gauge calibrated to at least 60 psi (pressure required for donut spare tires to be useful and safe). \$10
- 12-volt air compressor, to inflate spare tires to operating pressure. Get 12-v power from cigarette lighter, or portable jumper battery. \$65. Suggested: Vair, Model 88P; high capacity. Draws too much current for cigarette lighter.
- Cheater bar (1” X 2 feet long steel pipe: \$8 at hardware stores) to slip over end of vehicle lug wrench handle in case lug nuts are too tight. \$10
- 4-way lug wrench (get a large one, at least 23”) for good leverage and to quickly “spin off/on” lug nuts, especially when vehicle has no lug wrench. Recommend Ken-Tool model “35657”. \$55
- Set of hex wrenches (metric & U.S. Standard). Some aftermarket wheels require hex wrench to remove cover permitting access to lug nuts. \$20
- Soapy water in spray bottle – big help to identify leak in a tire; handy before using a plug. \$0
- Long, large, sturdy flat-blade screw driver to use as substitute when van/pickup has no shaft to lower the rear-mounted spare tire. Also can be used to pry off plastic hubcaps. \$10
- Breaker bar (2-foot, ½-inch drive) for use with sockets when gap around “aftermarket” wheels’ lug nut holes is too small for lug wrench fit. Good to have a ½-inch drive ratchet wrench, or old fashioned “speed wrench” to speed up turning nuts once “broken”. \$25
- Sockets (1/2-inch drive) in 17mm, 19mm (3/4”), 21mm (13/16”) & 7/8” for use with breaker bar and ratchet wrench. Deep sockets add flexibility when lugs protrude significantly beyond lug nuts (occurs often on full-sized, heavy duty vans and pickups). \$20
- Bolt and nut extractor sockets (1/2-inch drive) 17mm, 19mm (3/4”), 21mm (13/16”) & 7/8” made specially to grab heads of rounded lug nuts (“Special Tools”). Suggestion: Craftsman 3-piece flip-socket set; part number “47392”. \$50
- Extension bar (minimum 8-inch long) for ½-inch drive; required when must access nuts in a deep dish wheel. \$15
- Pliers, to permit sufficient hand torque to loosen rusted wing nuts securing spare tires (in car trunks and mini-vans). \$15
- Leather work gloves to protect hands from exposed sharp, broken steel bands while handling a blown out tire. \$10
- Set of two tough plastic wheel chocks to place under wheel diagonally opposite the flat tire to prevent vehicle from rolling while jacked up. \$8
- Can of “PB Penetrating Catalyst” (PB Blaster), or “Liquid Wrench” to spray on stubborn/rusted nuts to facilitate removal. \$10
- Headlamp (works better than flashlight) in case the breakdown occurs at night. \$45
- Metal mallet. If rim with flat tire sticks to the vehicle wheel after lug nuts are removed (usually due to rust), use mallet to strike metal on vehicle side of the rim; this should dislodge it. \$15
- Crowbar, to free wheels from fenders, and straighten exhaust pipes bent/damaged from slapping by detached tire treads. \$15

For when vehicle runs out of gas:

- 1-gallon gas can (empty) which can be used case-by-case to bring fuel from gas station. \$15
- Best to add fuel when vehicle is on level ground (not canted as on shoulder), since fuel will pool in tank, sometimes away from intake to the engine. Use funnel to prevent waste and spill. May need to push vehicle to level ground.
- Hint: once gas is in tank, if engine will not start, open the passenger door and stand on edge of passenger floor board; then “rock the car” hard, causing the added fuel to slosh in the tank and reach the engine intake. Have motorist first turn on his ignition to “start” position for a few seconds (to get gas in the fuel line to the engine), and then start the engine while you “rock the car”. I have used this technique successfully at least 20 times. Magic!