

Choosing Snow Tires for Winter Weather

How to Choose Snow Tires to Meet Driving Needs

By: R. Renée Bembry

Whether you drive a glamorous shiny new vehicle or roll along in an old clutter box, your vehicle's tires say a lot more for your vehicle than your vehicle's appearance. This is why whether you prefer performance tires, ultra performance tires, or all terrain tires; you will likely need to replace them with winter tires if you live in a snowy area.

The climate in which you live is one variable you should consider when you choose snow tires. Other variables include what kind of vehicle you drive, the size of your wheels, and how much money you plan to spend for winter tires.

In considering the climate, think about how much snow falls where you live. If you live in an area that gets small amounts of snow and it does not snow very often, you may be able to settle for inexpensive snow tires. On the other hand, if you live in an area where you expect heavy snowfall every winter, you might need to go with tires that provide the most traction even if they cost a little more.

In addition to location and cost, you must consider size when choosing snow tires. You must make sure you get the correct size snow tires for your vehicle. Your vehicle's tire size should be located on the tires that are currently on your car. If you recently purchased a used vehicle, however, you should verify your tire size because sometimes vehicle owners fit their vehicles with the wrong sized tires. You will not know

if the previous owner improperly fit tires on your vehicle unless you verify your tire size. You can verify the size by checking the tire info located in the vehicle's driver side doorjamb. You could also look in your owner's manual. Alternatively, you could contact the dealer or research online sources if you do not have a manual and no info is located in your doorjamb.

When examining winter tires, look for the "mountain/snowflake" symbol located on snow tire sidewalls. The mountain/snowflake symbol alerts consumers that snow tires they are considering fair well in industry wide tests that monitor tire performance under severe snowy weather conditions. The symbol looks like a picture of a mountain with a snowflake in its center.

Experts agree that using four winter tires as well as using tires that match is the best way to give drivers the most ability to maneuver through ice and snow. Tires that do not match could work against one another while rolling down the road because their treads have different designs. This is also one reason why some winter tire installations require replacement of all four regular season tires—not just the two front ones.

When deciding how much to spend for snow tires, remember that winter tire rubber is formulated to be more supple than other season tire rubber is. Supple rubber allows tires to grasp icy snowy roads better. Supple rubber also causes winter tire treads to wear out faster than regular tires. For these reasons, winter tires come without ratings and are not expected to last more than two or three seasons, depending on how often you drive.

Types of Snow Tires From Which to Choose

Performance Winter Tires

If looking for winter tires that also meet your desire for high driving performance, you might want to go with

performance winter tires. Performance tires grip ice and snow better than other winter tires, while at the same time allows drivers to maintain a lot of the ease of turning ability they enjoy with regular performance tires. Some performance winter tires require replacement of all four tires.

Studdable Or Studded Winter Tires

Studdable tires help to improve tire friction by grasping the road with metal studs, or protrusions. The studs are built into the tires and can be detected by looking in the tire tread areas. Although studded tires work great in easing friction, consumers might need to consult laws in areas in which they live regarding studded tires. This is because the studs tend to damage roadways and thus many cities have rules regarding their use. Another consideration is that studdable winter tires may be a bit noisy and may not last as long as non-studded winter tires. Still, when living in areas where ice frequently covers the roads, studded tires may be your best option.

Studless Winter Tires

Studless winter tires give drivers the maximum amount of friction available without using studs. Installing studless winter tires may also require replacement of all four tires.

Narrow Winter Tires

Narrow tires maneuver through snow and along icy ground better than wider tires do.

Another thing drivers could do when researching which snow tires to choose is to take a look at [Autosocks](#) for their wheels. Autosocks get drivers through snow during situations in which they were not expecting snow to fall, and thus find themselves unprepared. Autosocks are relatively inexpensive and store easily in your trunk.