

Rotated Your Tires Lately? Here's How!

by Rick Morris

As we all know, in order to promote longer tire life and preserve the excellent handling characteristics of our cars, it's important to rotate the tires on a regular basis. The people at AIM Tuning recommend rotating your tires every six thousand miles. As important as it is, it sometimes isn't convenient to get the car to the shop to have the tires rotated. This is another service task that you can perform at home, so we'll give you a set of step-by-step instructions. If you follow these instructions carefully, you'll be able to rotate your tires like a pro and save both time and money.

Like every other task, rotating your tires is much easier if you have the right tools. For this job, you will either a one and one-half ton floor jack or your standard Miata jack. The floor jack makes the job easier. You will also need at least two jack stands. The job is a little easier with four jack stands, but two will do just fine. You will also need a lug wrench. You can use the lug wrench that came with the car, but one of the wrenches that has an extension handle makes the job a lot easier.

The first thing to do is to break the lug nuts loose on your wheels just like you were going to change a tire. Just break them loose, don't loosen them a lot. If you have four jack stands, loosen the lug nuts on all four wheels.

Next, place something in front of the front wheels so the car doesn't move forward while you are jacking the car up. Most floor jacks come with chock blocks. If you don't have chock blocks, just use a piece of four by four or something similar.

The next step is to place the jack stands in the proper place in preparation for jacking the car up. In front of the rear wheel and behind the front wheel are small, rectangular notches in the underbody of the car. The notches are usually about six inches away from the wheel well. Put the jack stands next to these notches.

The next step is to jack the car up. If you have a floor jack, you can usually raise a whole side of the car at once. Place the jack carefully and jack the car up enough so that the wheels are off the ground. Put the jack stands in place to keep the car up. If you are doing all four wheels at once, lower the jack after the jack stands are in place and move to the other side of the car and jack it up and put the jack stands in place.

This is the Important Part!!! We are now ready to perform the tire ro-

rotation. One of the best-kept secrets of mechanics is how to properly perform this task. After years of research, we have uncovered this secret and are now about to share it with you. Starting with the right front tire, grasp the tire firmly with both hands. Your hands should be at the nine o'clock and three o'clock positions on the tire. Rotate the tire exactly one and one-sixteenth of a turn. No more and certainly no less. Continue this process with the left front, right rear and left rear tires. It is very important to do them in the proper order.

After you are done with all four tires, carefully lower the car, tighten all the lug nuts, and then use your torque wrench to tighten them to the correct .

That's all there it to it! Now you can rotate your tires like a pro!

My Winter Project....A Major Miata Modification

by Sara J McBride

If you've been to the first couple of events this year, you've no doubt noticed that I haven't been driving my car. If asked about it, I have usually mumbled something about wanting to let Rick drive for a change or something equally uninformative. I'm now ready to tell everybody what has really been going on. At the start of the winter, I decided that I wanted to do some serious performance and handling upgrade to my car. I really liked my car, but I felt that there was room for improvement in handling and especially power.

I enlisted the help of the fine people at AIM Tuning and swore them to secrecy. If you've been down to the shop over the past few months, you've no doubt noticed that a section of the shop has been closed off and the door to that section has been locked. Shane and Chuck have been telling everyone that it was a new shop area, but the truth was that they have been working furiously on my car all winter long. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them for all their hard work and especially for keeping it a secret. This project will put them on the nationwide map for Miata improvements, so I think it has all been worthwhile.

Suspension: The first area we addressed was the suspension of the car. Although I had the KYB AGX adjustable shocks, I wanted even more in the

are of performance handling. After lots of careful study and a thorough evaluation of every option, we decided to go with two complete sets of Bilstein computer-controlled shocks. This required significant modification to the frame and undercarriage of the car, but we felt strongly that the results are more than worth all the extra effort and expense. The computers have the capability of adjusting each shock several hundred times a second and the improvement in handling has to be experienced to be believed.

Power: We all love our cars, but the Miata has never been know as a real powerhouse in the engine department. We looked at all the options, including the Monster Miata, which is a Miata with a small-block Ford V-8. Even this seemed too tame for the performance improve