

Driving in summer

Five mistakes people make when using the air conditioning

- / **Turning on the air conditioning full blast without ventilating the car is one of the most common mistakes**
- / **The air nozzles should be pointed towards the ceiling instead of the passengers, to let it fall on them like a curtain**
- / **An interior temperature of 35 °C can affect driver reaction times, so it is advisable to keep the passenger compartment cool and ventilated**

Martorell, 11/07/2018.— It's been a long time since people would set out on a trip in the early hours of the morning to avoid driving under the hot sun, or driving down the motorway with the windows down to reduce heat build-up in the car. Unlike today, air conditioning was not standard equipment in the 80s. It takes three years to develop each model's cooling system. This time is used to study the geometry of the ducts and vents in 3D, and virtual simulations are performed to predict how the air will flow inside the car. Nevertheless, people still make mistakes when using the air conditioning. Below are five of the most common ones and a few tips on how to make better use of it:

1) Turning on the air conditioning full blast as soon as you get in the car: In summer, the interior of a car that has been left parked in the sun can reach 60 degrees Centigrade. That temperature can go back down to 25 degrees in about half an hour if you follow a few easy guidelines. One of the most common mistakes is turning on the air conditioning full blast. **“Open the doors and lower the windows for a minute before turning on the air conditioning”** is the first recommendation made by Ángel Suárez, an engineer at the SEAT Technical Centre. With this simple move you can **“naturally lower the temperature in the interior”**. Once the car has been ventilated, you can get in, close the doors and windows and switch on the air conditioning.

2) Keeping the air recirculation option activated: This is another classic mistake that people make, because keeping it on **“makes the windows fog up”**. Instead, Suárez recommends driving with the Auto option activated so that **“the air flow can regulate itself more evenly and efficiently.”**

3) Not turning on the air conditioning because the morning is ‘chilly’: Depending on where you are in Europe, some summer mornings can be cool. In spite of this, it's a good idea to **“activate the car's air conditioning, even if you set the temperature on high”** to prevent the windows from fogging up when the outside temperature begins to rise slightly.

4) Pointing the air nozzles incorrectly: **“Turn up the air conditioning, I can't feel anything”**, is a request often made by passengers in summer. According to this SEAT expert, most times **“it isn't a matter of temperature, but in which direction the air is flowing inside the car”**. In

order to get an even distribution of airflow, **“the nozzles should be pointing upwards, not towards people’s faces”**. With this simple move **“the air flows all around the interior of the car and reaches every passenger consistently”**.

5) Failing to perform regular maintenance: Just like with the oil, wheels or brake fluid, the air conditioning system on cars also requires specific maintenance. It is recommended to change the filters every 15,000 or 20,000 kilometres to **“prevent decreased flow rate and intensity”**, adds Ángel Suárez.

It’s important not to underestimate the effects of heat when driving in summer. According to the SEAT expert, an interior temperature of 35 °C causes the driver to react 20% slower than at 25 °C. The effect is similar to driving with a blood alcohol level of about 0.5 g/l. For this reason it’s important to keep the passenger compartment cool and well-ventilated.

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