

Wheels: A letter from Gary says, “I have a used 1998 Ford Explorer. I have put 55,000 of the 105,000 miles on it. It has never been tuned up in my three and a half years of ownership. I was informed that it has platinum plugs and shouldn’t need a tune up. Could having a tune up benefit the engine and/or my gas mileage? Considering the cost, this is an important decision. Also, as higher mileage occurs are there other maintenance items that need to be addressed (transmission, 4-wheel-drive components, etc.)? I love this vehicle and would like to keep it for a long time.”

Halderman: These are good questions. Even though the factory does not recommend that the spark plugs be replaced until about 100,000 miles, many professional service technicians recommend that they be replaced every 60,000 miles. Replacing the spark plugs will not likely cause a noticeable increase in performance or fuel economy. When they are replaced, I recommend that the factory specified spark plugs be used. It has been my experience that some high-performance replacement spark plugs can cause the engine to miss and may even cause the computer to set a diagnostic trouble code (DTC). I would also support the idea that the fluids be replaced according to the “severe” service instead as specified in the owner’s manual. For extra protection, consider synthetic oil and/or gear lubes.

