

**Wheels:** An e-mail question from JRP asks, “I bought a new car two years ago, and the tires were nearly bald after only 26,000 miles. I think tires used to last much longer. Are manufacturers using cheaper tires today? Is it true that rotating the tires will extend the life of a set of tires?”

**Haldeman:** The short answer is yes, rotating tires does increase tire life. Are the vehicle manufacturers building cheaper tires? The answer is complex. According to Goodyear tire engineers, the original equipment manufacturers, such as General Motors, Ford, and Honda, each specify specific performance standards. These standards include:

- Low rolling resistance for best fuel economy
- Low noise
- Handling, including evasive maneuvers
- Wet handling, including wet braking performance

It is a very difficult job to design and construct a tire that meets all of these standards. Notice that tire wear is not mentioned. In fact, in many advertisements for new vehicles, there is a warning that certain tires, especially on 18 inch or larger wheels, could have a life expectancy of less than 15,000 miles. By rotating tires, especially on front-wheel-drive vehicles, the wear is equally shared over all of the tires thereby increasing the life expectancy of all four tires. However, the cost involved in rotating the tires may not be justified compared with the cost savings in tire wear. When replacing tires, look for the tread wear rating; the higher the rating, the longer the tires should last. For additional information, visit [www.tirerack.com](http://www.tirerack.com).

