

AutoSock: What is acceptable wear and tear?

We cannot emphasise too often that AutoSock should only be used as a temporary measure to “get you moving again”, to “get you out of trouble”. AutoSock might well be used, for example, to get down to the main road in the morning, and to get back home in the evening, bearing in mind that it is standard practice for the local authorities to plough and salt the main roads, but not the side roads.

AutoSock are not in any way a substitute for winter tyres, although many people fit them to winter tyres when these no longer grip. Most people in the UK use them on summer tyres.

AutoSock are made of fabric, and are particularly likely to wear fast when driven on lumpy ice, or on tarmac. They will last much better when driven on soft fresh snow. How you decide to use them is up to you. With care they may last for several years, being used only as required, but they may be worn right out in one journey. This may be a nasty surprise, especially when you can't see what the surface is like under a top layer of freshly fallen snow.

AutoSock's guarantee covers manufacturing defects, e.g. bad stitching. It does not cover damage or wear. Some people may think that they have worn out much faster than expected, but the reality is that wear is directly related to the amount they are used, and the quality of the surface they are driven on. Small holes will appear sooner or later, maybe even after one short journey, becoming larger with use.

These pictures show three AutoSock with three stages of wear:

1. These are two years old and have been used many times for commuting, including driving on tarmac. They have probably done about fifteen miles in all. They're in very good shape.
2. These are also two years old; they're getting towards the end of their life, although they still work very well. They are used a lot on tarmac, and are often just left on the car when there's snow on the ground. There are lots of small holes, some larger ones appearing, but there's no significant damage to the sides.
3. These are for local, very slow speed use only, or for extra use on the non driving wheels. The holes are now too big, and there's damage to the side mesh where they've snagged on something. They need replacing.

Please note that if an AutoSock 'wear face' is allowed to disintegrate completely, the residual elastic loop, inside the wheel, will fall on to the vehicle axle and is likely to cause problems.

These notes have been produced by John Jordan Limited, UK and Irish distributor, and may not reflect the opinions of AutoSock AS. For the avoidance of doubt, follow the instructions on the packaging.



Driving with AutoSock

Here are some notes about what to expect from AutoSock, and some tips about how to get the best use from them:

General driving tips

First of all, please read the instructions, especially the comment “Avoid spinning the wheels, extreme braking and acceleration, since this could damage the product.”

The usual rules of driving in snow apply, i.e. pull off slowly, stay in as high a gear as possible, “anticipate” even more than normal, avoid hard braking.

The speed limit of 30mph / 50kph will seem quite fast enough on snow. It is a maximum speed, not a recommended speed!

How long will they last?

Fundamentally, the more you drive on clear roads / gritted tarmac / rutted ice, the faster they will wear out and the sooner you will need to buy another set.

They are a “Get you out of trouble” solution and are not intended for prolonged use. You will probably use them to get down to the gritted road, then you take them off ASAP it is safe to do so.

From the instructions: “The wear limit is reached as soon as 50% of the white road-contact fabric is worn out and the underlying black safety material has become visible.”

You will find that small holes start to appear as they become worn. This is no big deal and will not affect their performance until it becomes obvious that they are looking ragged and well worn – then they need replacing. If they are ripped, this is due to snagging on e.g. a loose mudguard, a loose screw on a wheel arch liner, some other third party influence.

There are bands of reinforcing material running across the AutoSock; these provide overall strength, help to prevent the socks from splitting after misuse, and help prevent holes from spreading.

Overall, use your commonsense about how long to use them, and of course and where possible you should avoid potholes, raised manholes etc. Avoid leaving them on overnight as they may freeze solid and then be damaged.

Fitting them

Fitting is very easy on most vehicles, more difficult on a few. The most difficult vehicles to fit are – no surprise – rear wheel drive cars with limited clearance. If you can’t get your forearms into the space between the wheel and the wheel arch, fitting will be difficult. But blame the car, not the AutoSock! If they are a very tight fit, too tight, please let us know because there is obviously a size issue that we need to learn about.

Specific driving tips

Some suggestions for situations where AutoSock are not making the difference expected:

- On a rear wheel drive car, uphill slope, sheet ice: You need some weight in the boot – it makes all the difference. Don’t just spin the wheels and trash the AutoSock.
 - On a hill in really slushy snow. You may drive forward then slip. The AutoSock are sticking to the snow but there isn’t enough strength in the snow to hold the weight of the vehicle. Roll back down a few feet, compressing the snow and driving out the water. Then try again, moving further up the hill than before. Three steps up, two back.
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