Continue

Download Article Get some relief from the heat with this easy-to-follow walkthrough Download Article You get into your car on a hot summer day and turn that AC on expecting to get a cool blast of fresh air. But if nothing comes out (or worse, the air is hot!), you're going to need to figure out what's going on. Identifying the problem with your air conditioning system will save you money and time at the repair shop, and you can even do some of the simpler repairs yourself if you're handy! In this article, we'll walk you through the diagnostic process so that you can enjoy driving again. Test the airflow in the vehicle by running the AC at max settings. The type of air blowing out tells you a lot about the nature of the problem. Swap out the cabin air filter (usually in the glovebox) if the air is smelly and slightly warm. That filter needs to be replaced regularly, but people rarely do it. If you have a leak or a problem with the compressor, take the vehicle to a professional to get the problem fixed. 1 Start your car's engine and turn on the AC. The air conditioner won't run properly unless your engine is running. Turn the AC on using the dials on your dashboard. Wait a few minutes for the system to warm up.[1] Start with the fan speed turned to its highest setting. If your car has a "Max AC" setting, select that option. 2 Listen for unusual noises coming from the AC. Put your ear to the vent and listen. If you hear unusual noises, it's a big sign that your compressor isn't working properly. It could be that the clutch is broken or screws holding the compressor in place are loose.[2] When your AC is on its highest setting, the clutch on the compressor should spin with the accessory belt.[3] The compressor is a cylindrical container, usually located next to the engine. It's the heavy lifter in your car's AC system—it's responsible for compressing the refrigerant and pumping it through your vents. The compressor will normally have two metal lines running into it. One goes to the radiator; the other goes to the dashboard. Advertisement 3 Measure the temperature of the air coming out of the vents. The temperature of the air coming out of your vents tells you a lot about where the problem is. Grab a meat thermometer and stick it in one of the vents. Wait a few minutes to get your reading.[4] If it's really hot outside, the air coming out of your vents will probably be 50–70 °F (10–21 °C). This is normal. If it's relatively tame or cold outside, it should be 35–40 °F (2–4 °C). If the temperature is warm or room temperature, you either don't have enough refrigerant in the system, the refrigerant is leaking, or the compressor is broken. 4 Confirm the airflow makes sense given your settings. Turn the AC dial in your car to the high and low settings to see if the airflow changes like it normally does when it's operating correctly. If the airflow is adequate, you can rule out issues with the blower motor.[5] If you don't have any air coming out of the vents, you probably have an issue with your blower motor. If the airflow slows down dramatically when it's at a higher speed setting, the problem is likely your filter. The location of your vehicle's air filter will differ from make and model to make and model, so refer to your user's manual to find the exact location. Usually, you open the glovebox and remove a little drawer to access the filter. 5 Adjust your vents to make sure they aren't interfering with air flow. Hold your hand over each vent and flip it to the open and close position to confirm they work. Then, slide the vent selectors to see if the air moves in the proper directions.[6] If changing the vent doesn't change anything, you have a "blend door" problem. Get a professional mechanic to fix this one. 6 Smell the air coming from the vents to confirm it's clean. If there are unusual smells, you could may have a leak in your radiator fluid. Alternatively, this could be a sign that it's time to change the cabin air filter. Remember to swap your AC filter out every 15,000 miles (24,000 km) or so. A filthy filter will stink up your car.[7] A lot of mechanics will note that a dirty filter often causes a car to smell musty, or moldy. Radiator fluid tends to smell a lot like antifreeze, which has a slightly sweet, chemical odor. 7 Check the cabin air filter and replace it if it's dirty. Especially if the air coming from your vents smells funny or if you think you have had a slow decrease in pressure for some time, check the air filter. You will be able to see if it has a buildup of dirt or debris on it.[8] It is possible that your cabin air filter is so blocked that it is interfering with your air pressure, and replacing it will be a relatively easy an inexpensive fix to your problem. Your car manual may have instructions on replacing the cabin filter. If it doesn't, try searching online for "replace cabin air filter" followed by the year, make, and model of your car (for example, you might search for "replace cabin air filter for 2006 Toyota Camry"). Advertisement 1 Remove any leaves or trash inside of your engine bay. A wayward leaf or a bundled up discarded bag that gets into the vents can block airflow and cause all kinds of damage. Remove any debris you find inside of your engine bay to see if that resolves the problem. Turn the car off before reaching inside of the hood. 2 Inspect the clutch while the AC is on maximum speed. The clutch is the round container on the end of your compressor. When the AC is on the highest speed, the clutch should be spinning along with the belt that's wrapped around the compressor. If it doesn't spin, your compressor and/or the clutch is damaged.[9] Get your vehicle inspected and repaired by a professional if the problem is the clutch or compressor. 3 Confirm the AC belt is on track and turning appropriately. Most AC systems rely on a belt to churn the compressor and provide energy. If the belt is off track, damaged, or it slipped off of the pully holding it against the compressor, your AC system won't work properly. You can buy a replacement belt yourself and pull it around all of the pulleys yourself, but this is a very easy and cheap repair for a pro. If you don't get the order of the pulleys correct, you could end up causing damage to your engine or engine components. 4 Test the AC fuse with a multimeter to confirm is working. Check your owner's manual for the location of your car's fuse panel, as it may be under the hood, in the trunk, or even in the driver's foot well area. A blown fuse can cause your AC to stop working. Remove the fuse and test the prongs with a multimeter to confirm the fuse is good.[10] If the fuse is dead, buy a replacement and simply pop it into the slot where your old AC fuse was installed. Note, if the fuse dies again, you have a wiring problem that requires a pro. 5 Look at the ground under your engine bay to spot refrigerant leaks. One of the most common AC temperature problems is low refrigerant. A vehicle's AC system is closed, so refrigerant should never be low unless you've got a leak.[11] If you don't see any leaks on the ground, you can run dye through the AC lines to identify minor leaks. Look for oily residue on or around hoses that attach AC components together. Oily spots indicate a refrigerant leak. If you do find a leak, hire a professional to repair the damage and refill your system. 6 Get a pro to bleed your AC system if the lines are frozen. If your AC blows cold initially but then stops being cold after some use, it could be freezing. Excess air and moisture in the system may lead components to literally freeze. Take the vehicle to a pro for help on this one.[12] Freezing can also be caused by an oversaturated receiver/drier or accumulator. If the problem is persistent, get your system to be flushed or evacuated with a vacuum pump. Advertisement Add New Question Question How do I know if my AC clutch is bad? Ed Beery Automotive Specialist Ed Beery is an Automotive Specialist and the Owner of InTechgrity Automotive Excellence based in Denver, Colorado. With more than eight years of experience, he specializes in providing maintenance and repair services for both individuals and companies. Ed and the InTechgrity Automotive Excellence Team are approved by the American Automobile Association (AAA) for repairs and are Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certified. The tell-tale signs of a bad AC clutch are the clutch not engaging when the AC is turned on (and voltage is present); the clutch clicking or banging but not engaging when the AC is turned on; the clutch slipping in and out of gear when the AC is turned on; and/or the vehicle idle dropping noticeably when the AC is turned on. Question What happens when an AC belt goes bad? Ed Beery Automotive Specialist Ed Beery is an Automotive Specialist and the Owner of InTechgrity Automotive Excellence based in Denver, Colorado. With more than eight years of experience, he specializes in providing maintenance and repair services for both individuals and companies. Ed and the InTechgrity Automotive Excellence Team are approved by the American Automobile Association (AAA) for repairs and are Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certified. You might notice a high-pitched squeal or chirp from the belt when the AC is turned on. There might also be intermittent cooling in the system as the belt gains and loses traction. Question How do you know if your car AC is low on gas? Ed Beery Automotive Specialist Ed Beery is an Automotive Specialist and the Owner of InTechgrity Automotive Excellence based in Denver, Colorado. With more than eight years of experience, he specializes in providing maintenance and repair services for both individuals and companies. Ed and the InTechgrity Automotive Excellence Team are approved by the American Automobile Association (AAA) for repairs and are Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certified. Low or no gas might be the problem if air is flowing throughout the system when the AC is turned on; the air is not cold or cool and doesn't get cold or cool anywhere in the system; the AC compressor is turning; the AC clutch is not making noise; and the AC clutch engages when the AC is turned on. See more answers Ask a Question Advertisement This article was co-authored by Tom Eisenberg and by wikiHow staff writer, Eric McClure. Tom Eisenberg is the Owner and General Manager of West Coast Tires & Service in Los Angeles, California, a family-owned AAA-approved and certified auto shop. Tom has over 10 years of experience in the auto industry. Modern Tire Dealer Magazine voted his shop one of the Best 10 Operations in the Country. This article has been viewed 1,722,522 times. Co-authors: 20 Updated: April 13, 2025 Views: 1,722,522 Categories: Car Maintenance and Repair Print Send fan mail to authors Thanks to all authors for creating a page that has been read 1,722,522 times. "It helped me get a pretty good idea of what is probably and what is definitely not the problem with my AC. As a woman, I like to have some understanding of the issue before taking it to a mechanic, when possible, so I don't get taken advantage of."..." more Share your story Download Article Get some relief from the heat with this easy-to-follow walkthrough Download Article You get into your car on a hot summer day and turn that AC on expecting to get a cool blast of fresh air. But if nothing comes out (or worse, the air is hot!), you're going to need to figure out what's going on. Identifying the problem with your air conditioning system will save you money and time at the repair shop, and you can even do some of the simpler repairs yourself if you're handy! In this article, we'll walk you through the diagnostic process so that you can enjoy driving again. Test the airflow in the vehicle by running the AC at max settings. The type of air blowing out tells you a lot about the nature of the problem. Swap out the cabin air filter (usually in the glovebox) if the air is smelly and slightly warm. That filter needs to be replaced regularly, but people rarely do it. If you have a leak or a problem with the compressor, take the vehicle to a professional to get the problem fixed. 1 Start your car's engine and turn on the AC. The air conditioner won't run properly unless your engine is running. Turn the AC on using the dials on your dashboard. Wait a few minutes for the system to warm up.[1] Start with the fan speed turned to its highest setting. If your car has a "Max AC" setting, select that option. 2 Listen for unusual noises coming from the AC. Put your ear to the vent and listen. If you hear unusual noises, it's a big sign that your compressor isn't working properly. It could be that the clutch is broken or screws holding the compressor in place are loose.[2] When your AC is on its highest setting, the clutch on the compressor should spin with the accessory belt.[3] The compressor is a cylindrical container, usually located next to the engine. It's the heavy lifter in your car's AC system—it's responsible for compressing the refrigerant and pumping it through your vents. The compressor will normally have two metal lines running into it. One goes to the radiator; the other goes to the dashboard. Advertisement 3 Measure the temperature of the air coming out of the vents. The temperature of the air coming out of your vents tells you a lot about where the problem is. Grab a meat thermometer and stick it in one of the vents. Wait a few minutes to get your reading.[4] If it's really hot outside, the air coming out of your vents will probably be 50–70 °F (10–21 °C). This is normal. If it's relatively tame or cold outside, it should be 35–40 °F (2–4 °C). If the temperature is warm or room temperature, you either don't have enough refrigerant in the system, the refrigerant is leaking, or the compressor is broken. 4 Confirm the airflow makes sense given your settings. Turn the AC dial in your car to the high and low settings to see if the airflow changes like it normally does when it's operating correctly. If the airflow is adequate, you can rule out issues with the blower motor.[5] If you don't have any air coming out of the vents, you probably have an issue with your blower motor. If the airflow slows down dramatically when it's at a higher speed setting, the problem is likely your filter. The location of your vehicle's air filter will differ from make and model to make and model, so refer to your user's manual to find the exact location. Usually, you open the glovebox and remove a little drawer to access the filter. 5 Adjust your vents to make sure they aren't interfering with air flow. Hold your hand over each vent and flip it to the open and close position to confirm they work. Then, slide the vent selectors to see if the air moves in the proper directions.[6] If changing the vent doesn't change anything, you have a "blend door" problem. Get a professional mechanic to fix this one. 6 Smell the air coming from the vents to confirm it's clean. If there are unusual smells, you could may have a leak in your radiator fluid. Alternatively, this could be a sign that it's time to change the cabin air filter. Remember to swap your AC filter out every 15,000 miles (24,000 km) or so. A filthy filter will stink up your car.[7] A lot of mechanics will note that a dirty filter often causes a car to smell musty, or moldy. Radiator fluid tends to smell a lot like antifreeze, which has a slightly sweet, chemical odor. 7 Check the cabin air filter and replace it if it's dirty. Especially if the air coming from your vents smells funny or if you think you have had a slow decrease in pressure for some time, check the air filter. You will be able to see if it has a buildup of dirt or debris on it.[8] It is possible that your cabin air filter is so blocked that it is interfering with your air pressure, and replacing it will be a relatively easy an inexpensive fix to your problem. Your car manual may have instructions on replacing the cabin filter. If it doesn't, try searching online for "replace cabin air filter" followed by the year, make, and model of your car (for example, you might search for "replace cabin air filter for 2006 Toyota Camry"). Advertisement 1 Remove any leaves or trash inside of your engine bay. A wayward leaf or a bundled up discarded bag that gets into the vents can block airflow and cause all kinds of damage. Remove any debris you find inside of your engine bay to see if that resolves the problem. Turn the car off before reaching inside of the hood. 2 Inspect the clutch while the AC is on maximum speed. The clutch is the round container on the end of your compressor. When the AC is on the highest speed, the clutch should be spinning along with the belt that's wrapped around the compressor. If it doesn't spin, your compressor and/or the clutch is damaged.[9] Get your vehicle inspected and repaired by a professional if the problem is the clutch or compressor. 3 Confirm the AC belt is on track and turning appropriately. Most AC systems rely on a belt to churn the compressor and provide energy. If the belt is off track, damaged, or it slipped off of the pully holding it against the compressor, your AC system won't work properly. You can buy a replacement belt yourself and pull it around all of the pulleys yourself, but this is a very easy and cheap repair for a pro. If you don't get the order of the pulleys correct, you could end up causing damage to your engine or engine components. 4 Test the AC fuse with a multimeter to confirm is working. Check your owner's manual for the location of your car's fuse panel, as it may be under the hood, in the trunk, or even in the driver's foot well area. A blown fuse can cause your AC to stop working. Remove the fuse and test the prongs with a multimeter to confirm the fuse is good.[10] If the fuse is dead, buy a replacement and simply pop it into the slot where your old AC fuse was installed. Note, if the fuse dies again, you have a wiring problem that requires a pro. 5 Look at the ground under your engine bay to spot refrigerant leaks. One of the most common AC temperature problems is low refrigerant. A vehicle's AC system is closed, so refrigerant should never be low unless you've got a leak.[11] If you don't see any leaks on the ground, you can run dye through the AC lines to identify minor leaks. Look for oily residue on or around hoses that attach AC components together. Oily spots indicate a refrigerant leak. If you do find a leak, hire a professional to repair the damage and refill your system. 6 Get a pro to bleed your AC system if the lines are frozen. If your AC blows cold initially but then stops being cold after some use, it could be freezing. Excess air and moisture in the system may lead components to literally freeze. Take the vehicle to a pro for help on this one.[12] Freezing can also be caused by an oversaturated receiver/drier or accumulator. If the problem is persistent, get your system to be flushed or evacuated with a vacuum pump. Advertisement Add New Question Question How do I know if my AC clutch is bad? Ed Beery Automotive Specialist Ed Beery is an Automotive Specialist and the Owner of InTechgrity Automotive Excellence based in Denver, Colorado. With more than eight years of experience, he specializes in providing maintenance and repair services for both individuals and companies. Ed and the InTechgrity Automotive Excellence Team are approved by the American Automobile Association (AAA) for repairs and are Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certified. The tell-tale signs of a bad AC clutch are the clutch not engaging when the AC is turned on (and voltage is present); the clutch clicking or banging but not engaging when the AC is turned on; the clutch slipping in and out of gear when the AC is turned on; and/or the vehicle idle dropping noticeably when the AC is turned on. Question What happens when an AC belt goes bad? Ed Beery Automotive Specialist Ed Beery is an Automotive Specialist and the Owner of InTechgrity Automotive Excellence based in Denver, Colorado. With more than eight years of experience, he specializes in providing maintenance and repair services for both individuals and companies. Ed and the InTechgrity Automotive Excellence Team are approved by the American Automobile Association (AAA) for repairs and are Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certified. You might notice a high-pitched squeal or chirp from the belt when the AC is turned on. There might also be intermittent cooling in the system as the belt gains and loses traction. Question How do you know if your car AC is low on gas? Ed Beery Automotive Specialist Ed Beery is an Automotive Specialist and the Owner of InTechgrity Automotive Excellence based in Denver, Colorado. With more than eight years of experience, he specializes in providing maintenance and repair services for both individuals and companies. Ed and the InTechgrity Automotive Excellence Team are approved by the American Automobile Association (AAA) for repairs and are Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certified. Low or no gas might be the problem if air is flowing throughout the system when the AC is turned on; the air is not cold or cool and doesn't get cold or cool anywhere in the system; the AC compressor is turning; the AC clutch is not making noise; and the AC clutch engages when the AC is turned on. See more answers Ask a Question Advertisement This article was co-authored by Tom Eisenberg and by wikiHow staff writer, Eric McClure. Tom Eisenberg is the Owner and General Manager of West Coast Tires & Service in Los Angeles, California, a family-owned AAA-approved and certified auto shop. Tom has over 10 years of experience in the auto industry. Modern Tire Dealer Magazine voted his shop one of the Best 10 Operations in the Country. This article has been viewed 1,722,522 times. Co-authors: 20 Updated: April 13, 2025 Views: 1,722,522 Categories: Car Maintenance and Repair Print Send fan mail to authors Thanks to all authors for creating a page that has been read 1,722,522 times. "It helped me get a pretty good idea of what is probably and what is definitely not the problem with my AC. As a woman, I like to have some understanding of the issue before taking it to a mechanic, when possible, so I don't get taken advantage of."..." more Share your story There's nothing worse than getting into your car on a freezing morning, turning on the heater, and feeling nothing but cold air. It's frustrating, especially when you're already shivering and just want a warm, comfortable drive. But don't panic, this issue is more common than you might think, and in many cases, it's easy to fix.This post will help you understand the possible causes and walk you through simple troubleshooting steps to get your heater working again quickly.How Your Car Heater Works?Before diving into the causes and fixes, it's important to understand how your car's heating system works. Unlike a home heater that uses electricity, your car's heater relies on engine heat. Here's how it functions:The engine produces heat as it runs.Coolant absorbs the engine's heat and circulates through the heater core.The heater core acts like a small radiator, transferring heat to the air.A blower motor pushes the warm air into your cabin through vents.Temperature settings are controlled by blend doors and other HVAC components.If any part of this system fails, your car heater won't work properly.Common Reasons Your Car Heater Is Not Working (With Fixes)Here are all the reasons why your car heater is not working and their solutions in detail, which are as follows:#1. Low Coolant LevelWhenever the coolant level in your car is low, your car heater will not work and vice versa, the engine will overheat.SymptomsThe heater blows cold air instead of warm airThe engine temperature is rising or overheatingThe low coolant warning light is flashing on the dashboardWhy it HappensYour car's heater relies on the warm coolant from the engine to warm the air before it enters the cabin. When the coolant level gets too low, there isn't enough fluid to reach the heater core, leaving you with nothing but cold air. This problem is often caused by leaks in the cooling system, a faulty radiator cap, or air pockets preventing proper coolant flow.How to Fix it?Check the Coolant Level: Open the hood and inspect the coolant reservoir and radiator (only when the engine is cold). If the level is low, this could be the reason your heater isn't working.Top Off The Coolant: Add the correct type of coolant as directed in your vehicle manual. Mixing different types of coolant can cause problems.Check For Leaks: Check for puddles of coolant underneath the car. If you see green, orange or pink fluid, you probably have a leak.Inspect Components: Check the radiator, hoses and water pump for visible signs of damage or leaks. If leaks are found, repair or replacement may be necessary.Bleed the System: If air pockets are trapped in the cooling system, they can block the flow of coolant. Some vehicles require a bleeding procedure to remove air after adding coolant.Keeping your coolant at the proper level not only ensures the heater works, but also prevents the engine from overheating, which can require costly repairs if ignored.#2. Faulty ThermostatA faulty thermostat is one of the most common culprits behind a car heater blowing cold air. The thermostat controls the flow of coolant through the engine, ensuring it reaches the proper operating temperature.SymptomsEngine takes longer than usual to warm upTemperature gauge remains low or doesn't reach the optimal rangeHeater blows cold or lukewarm airWhy It HappensWhen the thermostat is stuck open, coolant flows continuously through the engine, preventing it from heating up properly. As a result, the heater core, which relies on hot coolant, can't produce warm air for the cabin.How to Fix It?To check if the thermostat is the issue, monitor the temperature gauge while driving. If it stays low or doesn't reach the normal range, it's likely time to replace the thermostat. Replacing it will restore the correct coolant flow and get your heater working again.#3. Clogged or Leaking Heater CoreA clogged or leaking heater core can cause weak or no heat from the vents, foggy windows, and a sweet smell in the cabin. These issues are a sign that your heater core is either blocked or leaking coolant, affecting the heating system.SymptomsWeak or no heat from the ventsFoggy windows (coolant leaking inside the cabin)Sweet smell inside the car (coolant odor)Why It Happens?The heater core works by using hot coolant from the engine to heat the air inside the cabin. When the heater core becomes clogged, it restricts the flow of coolant, preventing the air from warming up properly.A leak in the heater core can cause coolant to escape, lowering the coolant level and leading to reduced heating efficiency. If coolant leaks inside the cabin, it can cause a sweet smell and foggy windows due to condensation on the glass.How To Fix It?To clear a clogged heater core, flush it with a garden hose to remove blockages.If the heater core is leaking, it may need to be replaced. This is usually a more involved repair that may require professional help, as the heater core is often difficult to access and replace on your own.#4. Blower Motor or Resistor FailureA malfunctioning blower motor or resistor can prevent air from flowing into your car's cabin, leaving you without heat when you need it most.SymptomsNo air blowing from ventsFan works only on certain speedsLoud noises coming from the blower motorWhy It Happens?The blower motor is responsible for pushing air into your car's cabin, including the heated air from the heater core. If the blower motor or the resistor that controls its speeds fails, the airflow can stop altogether, or it may only work at certain speeds. In some cases, a loud noise could indicate a failing motor or debris inside.How To Fix It?Check the blower motor fuse and replace it if blown.Test the blower motor by changing the fan speeds to see if it responds properly.If the motor only works on certain speeds, the resistor may need replacing.Inspect the blower motor for any visible signs of damage or wear and replace it if necessary.#5. Blend Door or Actuator ProblemsIf your car's heater isn't working properly, the blend door or actuator could be the culprit. This part is responsible for controlling the temperature of the air flowing through the cabin, and if it's malfunctioning, you might find yourself stuck with either hot or cold air.SymptomsStuck on hot or cold air Clicking noise coming from behind the dashboard Heater works intermittently, sometimes blowing hot air, other times coldWhy It Happens?The blend door is a crucial component of your car's climate control system. It controls the flow of air between the hot and cold settings, allowing you to adjust the temperature to your preference. If the blend door becomes stuck or the actuator fails, it can prevent the air from being directed properly.This can result in only hot air or only cold air blowing from the vents. In some cases, you may hear a clicking sound coming from behind the dashboard, indicating that the actuator is malfunctioning.How to Fix It?Listen for clicking noises behind the dashboard, which may indicate a faulty actuator.Try adjusting the temperature settings to see if the air temperature changes at all.If the air doesn't change, the blend door or actuator may need to be inspected and replaced.In some cases, the dashboard may need to be removed to access the blend door, so this repair can be more complex. If you're not comfortable doing this yourself, consider taking the car to a professional mechanic.#6. Broken Control Panel or ButtonsIf your car heater isn't working properly, the issue might be with the control panel or buttons. A malfunction in these components can prevent you from adjusting the temperature or settings correctly.SymptomsHeater doesn't respond to temperature adjustmentsButtons or dials feel loose or unresponsiveDisplay or controls are flickering or not lighting upWhy It Happens?Over time, the control panel and buttons in your car can wear out or become damaged, especially if they are frequently used. Electrical connections or internal components may become faulty, preventing the system from receiving your input to adjust the temperature or airflow.This can lead to your heater blowing cold air or not functioning at all. If the control panel is damaged or buttons are stuck, the heater may not be able to adjust as needed.How To Fix It?Inspect the control panel and buttons for visible damage, such as cracks or wear.Check if any buttons are sticking or not responding when pressed.If the issue is electrical, check the fuses or wiring connected to the control panel.Reset the system by disconnecting the car battery for a few minutes and reconnecting it.If the problem persists, you may need to replace the control panel or have the buttons repaired by a professional.#7. Radiator IssuesA faulty radiator can cause your heater to blow cold air and can even lead to engine overheating. Understanding how to spot radiator issues can save you from costly repairs and uncomfortable drives.SymptomsHeater blows cold airEngine temperature rises higher than normalVisible coolant leaks under the carSteam or unusual odors coming from the engineWhy It Happens?The radiator plays a critical role in maintaining the engine's temperature by dissipating heat from the coolant. Over time, the radiator can become clogged, damaged, or develop leaks.If the radiator is not functioning properly, the coolant won't circulate effectively, causing the heater to blow cold air and the engine to overheat. This can be caused by debris buildup, corrosion, or physical damage to the radiator.How To Fix It?Inspect the radiator for visible signs of leaks or damage.Check the radiator fins for blockages caused by dirt, leaves, or debris.Flush the radiator if there is buildup or corrosion inside.Ensure the radiator cap is securely tightened to maintain proper pressure.If the radiator is severely damaged or leaking, consider replacing it.Consult a professional mechanic if you're unsure about the condition of your radiator or if further repairs are needed.By addressing radiator issues early, you can ensure that your car's cooling system works efficiently and your heater blows warm air as it should.8. Air in Cooling SystemAir trapped in the cooling system can prevent your car's heater from working properly. It can cause fluctuating temperatures and reduce the efficiency of the heater.SymptomsHeater blows cold air intermittentlyFluctuating or inconsistent cabin temperatureBubbling or gurgling noises from the dashboard or engine bayWhy It Happens?Air can get trapped in the cooling system when there's a leak, after coolant is drained and replaced, or if the system is not properly bled after maintenance.This trapped air creates pockets that prevent the coolant from flowing smoothly through the heater core, resulting in cold air blowing from the vents.The air pockets can also cause the engine to overheat or the heater to fail to maintain a consistent temperature.How To Fix It?Check the coolant level and top it off if necessary.Bleed the cooling system to remove trapped air. This can often be done by loosening the radiator cap while the engine is cool or using a specific bleeder valve (refer to your manual for instructions).Inspect for any leaks in the radiator, hoses, or water pump.Run the engine with the heater on full to allow air to escape from the system, checking for any improvement in temperature.Quick Fixes for No Heat in CarCheck Coolant Level: Low coolant can prevent heat; top it up if needed.Inspect Thermostat: A stuck-open thermostat won't allow proper heating.Clear Heater Core: Flush the heater core if clogged.Check Blend Door Actuator: Ensure it's functioning and directing warm air.Verify Heater Control Valve: Replace if stuck closed.Bleed Air from Cooling System: Air pockets can block heat flow.Inspect Blower Motor & Fuse: Replace if not working.Check Radiator & Hoses: Look for leaks or blockages.Common Mistakes by Mechanics for No Heat in CarIgnoring Coolant Level & Air Pockets – Not checking or bleeding air from the cooling system properly.Misdiagnosing the Thermostat – Assuming it's fine without testing or replacing it unnecessarily.Overlooking Heater Core Issues – Not checking for clogs or leaks in the heater core.Skipping Blend Door Inspection – Failing to check if the actuator is stuck or malfunctioning.Replacing Parts Without Testing – Changing heater control valves or blower motors without verifying the real issue.Neglecting Radiator & Hoses – Not checking for blockages or collapsed hoses affecting coolant flow.Ignoring Electrical Issues – Not testing fuses, relays, or wiring for blower motor operation.Using Wrong Coolant Mix – Incorrect coolant ratio can affect heat transfer.FAQsCar Heater Blowing Warm Air Not HotIf your car's heater is blowing warm air instead of hot, it could be due to a low coolant level, a partially clogged heater core, a malfunctioning thermostat, or an issue with the blend door actuator.Car has no heat but isn't overheatingIf your car has no heat but isn't overheating, the problem may be related to the heating system rather than the engine cooling system. Common causes include low coolant levels, a clogged heater core, a bad thermostat or air trapped in the cooling system.Why is my car heater blowing cold air?A car heater blowing cold air may be due to low coolant, a faulty thermostat, a clogged heater core, or a broken blend door actuator. Check coolant levels and inspect these parts for issues.why is my heater not working in my car?If your car's heater is not working, causes could include low coolant levels, a bad thermostat, a clogged heater core, or a bad blower motor.why is the heat not working in car but ac works?If your car's heat is not working but the AC does, check the coolant level, thermostat, heater core, and blend door actuator. Low coolant or a stuck thermostat can prevent heat, while a clogged heater core or faulty actuator can block warm air. When temperatures start to rise, few things are more frustrating than getting into a car without a functional air conditioner. If you find yourself in this situation, be aware that your car's AC may not work as it should for several reasons. By identifying the underlying causes of a malfunctioning system, you can discover why your car AC is not working and find the right solutions to keep you cool and comfortable on the road. What Causes the AC Not to Work in a Car? Many factors can cause a car's AC to not work properly, including mechanical failure, filter problems, a car AC leak, damage to the system, or disruptions with any parts or components related to the AC system. Often, what causes the AC to not work in your car can be simple to identify if you know what to look for. Make a note of the AC problems you experience, which may include the system: Blowing warm or hot air, even with the cold air turned up Blowing cold air only under certain conditions Working intermittently Failing to turn on completely Making sure your AC system is in good working condition is important for comfort, plus the health and safety of you and your passengers. Investigating the reason behind your car's AC failure is the first step in troubleshooting the issue. 9 Common AC Problems If your car AC is not working the way it should, it could be caused by one of these common AC problems. 1. Clogged Cabin Filter Your car's cabin air filter helps to keep the air in the vehicle clean and free from dust, pollen, and other pollutants. Over time, these particles can accumulate in the filter and obstruct the air passage. When the cabin air filter gets clogged or hasn't been replaced recently, it restricts airflow and causes your AC system to work harder than it should. Replacing or cleaning the air cabin filter can increase cooling efficiency and improve your car's AC performance. 2. Low Refrigerant Without refrigerant, your car cannot circulate cold air throughout the cabin. Refrigerants are crucial for regulating the air that comes through your AC system to a nice, comfortable temperature. Insufficient refrigerant levels can hinder the cooling process, so only warm air blows from the vents. Since your AC is a closed system—meaning there is no need to "top off" refrigerant over time—low levels typically indicate it's time for an AC performance test and checkup since it may suggest a leak. 3. AC Leak Your car's AC system has several different components that pass or condition the air so it cools down. Any leaks in the system's hoses, O-rings, or seals can reduce cooling efficiency. Not only this but leaving a leak unaddressed can lead to bigger problems down the road. Car AC leaks are one of the most common AC problems. They can be caused by accidents or collisions, cracks in the system, improper maintenance, or clogs that can cause pressure to build in the system and compromise the components. It can be challenging to identify a leak on your own, but professional diagnostics can quickly identify a potential leak in your system. 4. Broken Fans Like any other component of your car, the fans in your AC system can break or malfunction after a while. If they do, it can significantly reduce the effectiveness of the AC system overall by restricting or halting airflow. Sometimes, the AC fan works perfectly well only to stop working for no apparent reason—and work perfectly again the next day. This may not be a problem with the fan itself. Instead it could be an electrical issue, a problem with the blower motor, or burnt-out system components that impact the way the fan functions. 5. Compressor Issues The AC compressor is responsible for pressurizing and circulating refrigerant in the system. It does this by shifting the air pressure during the cooling process, helping to create the ideal environment in the system to transfer heat energy away from the cabin and allow cold air to circulate. If the compressor is faulty or won't work properly, the AC system cannot cool the airflow efficiently. There may be problems with the AC compressor if you hear odd noises near the engine, only feel warm or hot air, or see visible damage to any compressor parts. 6. Electrical Problems There are many electrical parts involved in your car's AC system. Problems with the wiring, the breaker, or the capacitor can result in electrical issues for your car's AC. Fortunately, you can troubleshoot some of these if you suspect it's an electrical issue. If your AC system seems to have trouble starting up, turns on and off at regular intervals, or seems to have problems with power trips, it could mean a problem with the electrical system. This could be as simple as a damaged wire or a bad fuse. 7. Faulty Pressure Switch The pressure switch monitors pressure levels in the AC system and ensures the refrigerant remains stable. If refrigerant pressure gets too high or low, it can restrict the function of, or even damage, the compressor. A defective pressure switch can also prevent the compressor from engaging at all. This can result in only warm air coming through the vents. You may need a pressure switch replacement if the AC system only functions some days and not others or if it won't seem to turn on. 8. Sensor Problems Various sensors in your car's AC system detect temperature and operational changes and trigger the system to react by starting, stopping, or slowing down operations. Faulty sensors can cause inaccurate temperature readings, which may cause the system to function improperly. If these sensors fail, it can impact whether other components can do their job to cool the airflow in the cabin. Sensor problems often look like unexplained air temperature fluctuations or a lack of cold coming through the system. 9. Damaged Head Unit or Controls The head unit refers to the area inside the cabin that allows you to control the temperature, fan speed, and air conditioning mode. Issues with the AC controls or the head unit can lead to problems with temperature regulation, which often causes an inability to effectively communicate with other components of the AC system. The buttons and knobs of the controls may be loose, damaged, or unresponsive. In this case, it's vital to have them repaired or replaced by a qualified technician. Restore Your Car's AC System There are many reasons to explain why your car AC is not working correctly. If you're experiencing any of these common AC problems, take steps today to get your system working like new. Properly diagnosing and repairing AC issues requires expertise and specialized tools. Your car is in good hands when you bring it to Meineke. Don't suffer in the heat any longer. Schedule a professional inspection and AC repair service at a Meineke location near you. Summer is right around the corner, and things are heating up. You hop into your ride, turn the air conditioning to max, and immediately wonder, "Why is my A/C blowing hot air?!" By the end of your commute, it hasn't gotten any cooler, and you're sweatier than a snowball in a microwave. The first step to getting your A/C back in working order is to diagnose the problem, and we're here to help. Read on to learn about the common failure points of your vehicle's A/C system, and where to get them repaired or replaced. What Causes Your Car A/C to Blow Hot Air? If you find your car A/C not cooling in hot weather, it could be due to a leak in your system, a faulty condenser, or a broken compressor. 1. There May be a Refrigerant Leak Refrigerant is the lifeblood of your automobile's A/C system. By compressing, condensing, drying, and evaporating refrigerant, your A/C system uses thermodynamics (though it feels like magic) to make hot air cold. Without refrigerant, your car's A/C can't effectively do its job. If your vehicle has developed a refrigerant leak, whether through a loose fitting, a busted hose, or another failed component, you'll likely be blasted with hot air when the air conditioner is on. To get your hot A/C blowing cold again, you'll need to recharge it with refrigerant, but it's not as simple as topping off the system — you'll need to identify and fix the leak first. Unfortunately, spotting a refrigerant leak can be difficult since it escapes into the atmosphere rather than collecting in a puddle underneath your car. You may get lucky and spot some oily residue at the source of the leak. However, you'll likely need to bring your vehicle to a professional, who will find the leak by diagnosing the system, addressing and fixing the problem, and recharging your A/C with refrigerant. Firestone Fun Fact: Refrigerants, believe it or not, have been a "hot" topic since the mid-1970s. From catastrophic levels of ozone depletion to international treaties, refrigerant and its alternatives have had quite a colorful history. If you want to gain some insight into how your car's A/C system works and learn about refrigerant's juicy backstory in the process, check out our article, "Everything You Need to Know About Your Car's A/C." 2. You Could Have a Blocked or Faulty Condenser To keep your vehicle cool, refrigerant has to absorb heat from the air, and in doing so, turns into vapor. It's the A/C condenser's job to convert the gaseous refrigerant back into a liquid state, which enables the cycle to continue. Like your car's radiator, A/C condensers utilize many thin metal fins to cool down the refrigerant inside. Unfortunately, the intricate, delicate structure that makes A/C condensers so effective also makes them vulnerable to blockages from road dirt and debris or accidental damage. If your condenser is blocked, it may not be able to cool refrigerant enough and the air will blow warm or hot from the vents. On the other hand, if it has sustained serious damage, it may allow refrigerant to escape into the atmosphere. In either case, the cooling cycle is unable to continue, and your A/C will blow warmer air than it should. 3. Your Compressor Might Be Broken, or Its Clutch Isn't Engaging If refrigerant is the lifeblood of your A/C system, the compressor is the heart since its job is to circulate refrigerant through the system. Overheating, lack of lubrication, and low refrigerant levels are all common causes of compressor failure. Since compressors don't need to be engaged all of the time, they turn on and off by utilizing a clutch. So if your compressor isn't running, the compressor clutch or a failed clutch switch could also be the culprit. What Causes Low or No Airflow Coming from the A/C? Cool (or maybe not so cool) — now you know a few potential causes for your A/C outputting hot air, but what if your A/C is cooling, but not blowing enough air — or none at all? In that case, you may have a clog in the system, a faulty blower motor, or an issue with your electrical system. 4. Your Air Intake or Cabin Air Filter is Potentially Clogged Fortunately, if A/C airflow has been reduced, it might be as simple as clearing some leaves out of your ventilation system's air intake or replacing a dust-packed cabin air filter. On many vehicles, the A/C's air intake can be found at the base of the windshield under a plastic grate. Check to see if leaves or other debris have fallen behind the grate, and if they have, use a vacuum to suck them out. If that doesn't fix the problem, it may be time to have your cabin air filter looked at — especially if you've noticed a musty smell coming from your vents. Not only can dirty cabin filters house harmful bacteria, but they can restrict the airflow coming out of your vents. The location of your cabin filter depends on the make and model of your vehicle, but some common areas to check for yours are: In the engine compartment near the base of the windshield Under the dash Behind the glove box Most cabin filters can be easily replaced at home, but if you need assistance replacing yours, consider visiting your local Firestone Complete Auto Care. 5. The Blower Motor May Not Be Operating Properly The blower motor is responsible for pushing air through the vents inside your car. So if you have absolutely no airflow coming through your vents, it's possible that your blower motor or the resistor that controls its speed has failed. 6. There Could Be a Problem in Your Electrical System Blown fuses, bad rel