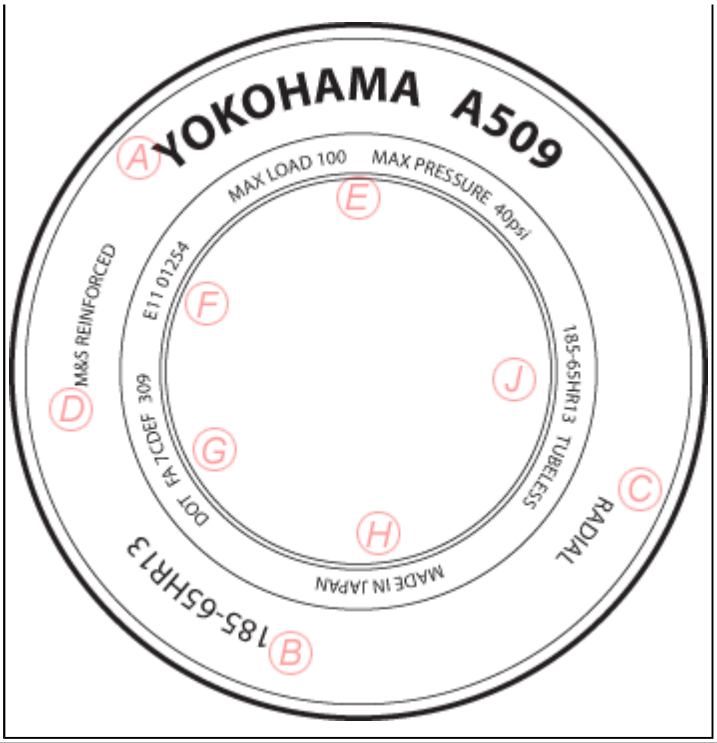
Decoding all that information on the sidewall

It's confusing isn't it? All numbers, letters, symbols, mysterious codes. Actually, most of that information is surplus to what you need to know. So here's the important stuff:

	Key	Description
	A	Manufacturers or brand name, and commercial name or identity.
	B and	Tyre size, construction and speed rating designations. *Tubeless* designates a tyre which



J	requires no inner tube. See tyre sizes and speed ratings below.
C	Denotes type of tyre construction.
D	M&S denotes a tyre designed for mud and snow. *Reinforced* marking only where applicable.
E	Load and pressure marking requirement (not applicable in the UK). These go from a load index of 50 (190kg) up to an index of 169 (5800kg).
F	ECE (not EEC) type approval mark and number.
G	North American Dept of Transport compliance symbols and identification numbers.
H	Country of manufacture.

Also on the sidewall, you might find the following info embossed in the rubber.
The temperature rating - an indicator of how well the tire withstands heat buildup. "A" is the highest rating; "C" is the lowest.
The traction rating - an indicator of how well the tire is capable of stopping on wet pavement. "A" is the highest rating; "C" is the lowest.
The tread-wear rating - a comparative rating for the useful life of the tire's tread. A tire with a tread-wear rating of 200, for example, could be expected to last twice as long as one with a rating of 100. Tread-wear grades typically range between 60 and 600 in 20-point increments. It is important to consider that this is a relative indicator, and the actual life of a tire's tread will be affected by quality of road surfaces, type of driving, correct tire inflation, proper wheel alignment and other variable factors. In other words, don't think that a tread-wear rating of 100 means a 30,000 mile tyre.

Encoded in the US DOT information (G on the diagram above) is a two-letter code that identifies where the tyre was manufactured in detail. In other words, what factory and in some cases, what city it was manufactured in. It's the first two letters after the 'DOT' - in this case "FA" denoting Yokohama.
This two-letter identifier is worth knowing in case you see a tyre recall on the evening news where they tell you a certain factory is recalling tyres. Armed with the two-letter identifier list, you can figure out if you are affected. It's a nauseatingly long list, and I've not put it on this page. But if you click here it will popup a separate window with just those codes in it.

DOT Codes and the 6-year shelf life

As part of the DOT code (G above), there is a tyre manufacture date stamped on the sidewall. Take a look at yours - there will be a three- or four-digit code. This code denotes when the tyre was manufactured, and as a rule-of-thumb, you should never use tyres more than 6 years old. The rubber in tyres degrades over time, irrespective of whether the tyre is being used or not. When you get a tyre change, if you can, see if the tyre place will allow you to inspect the new tyres first. It's not uncommon for these shops to have stuff in stock which is more than 6 years old. The tyre might look brand new, but it will delaminate or have some other failure within weeks of being put on a vehicle.
Reading the code. The code is pretty simple. The three-digit code was for tyres manufactured before 2000. So for example 1 7 8 means it was manufactured in the 17th week of 8th year of the decade. There was no way of determining which decade, so in fact, 1 7 8 could mean the 17th week of 1988....Good tip : if the tyre has a 3-digit code, don't buy it!!
After 2000, the code was switched to a 4-digit code. Same rules apply, so for example 3 0 0 3 means the tyre was manufactured in the 30th week of 2003.

DOT Age Code Calculator

The calculation built in to this page is up-to-date based on today's date. If the DOT age code on your tyres is older than this code, change your tyres.

DOT AGE CODE: 05 00

Interesting note : in June 2005, Ford and GM admitted that tyres older than 6 years posed a hazard and from their 2006 model year onwards, started printing warnings to this effect in their drivers handbooks for all their vehicles.