

How to Change Your Oil and Filter

Motor oil, or engine oil, helps lubricate the moving parts in your car, truck, or SUV's engine, which improves the lifespan and performance of the engine, and can also affect gas mileage and engine temperature. Regular oil changes are a scheduled maintenance task that replaces the dirty, contaminated oil in your vehicle with fresh, contaminant-free oil to help keep your engine performing its best for longer and includes the replacement of the filter which may have collected debris circulated through the oil. Engine oil traps and suspends harmful contaminants like metal particles, ash, soot, and water from damaging your engine and reduces friction and wear. Maintaining a schedule of regular oil changes can prevent engine wear and more expensive damage from occurring due to a lack of lubrication. If your vehicle has conventional oil, it's recommended that the oil is changed every 3 months or 3,000 miles, whichever comes first; for vehicles with synthetic oil, they should be serviced every 6 months or 5,000 miles in many cases. Your vehicle's owner's manual will detail the specific maintenance intervals and oil type and weight for your car, truck, or SUV as recommended by the manufacturer. Performing an oil change yourself is an easy task that will give you peace of mind and keep your engine running better for longer.

As always before any job take a look at your service manual, including the proper amount and weight of oil for your vehicle. If you don't feel completely comfortable doing this yourself, we can refer you to a professional technician. Select your workspace, set brake and chock wheels.

Step 1: Select your workspace, set brake and chock wheels

Find a flat, stable surface where you can work, like a driveway or garage. Make sure your vehicle has had at least 15-20 minutes to cool down. Your engine will retain heat long after shutting off the car, so it's important to wait until it's completely cool to start the job. Set the parking brake and chock your rear wheels.

Step 2: Raise the front of your vehicle

Use a jack and jack stands (or ramps) to raise the front of the vehicle. Jacking up the front of your vehicle and placing it on jack stands will allow you to reach the oil drain plug easily, but if you have a vehicle with plenty of ground clearance, it may not be necessary.

Step 3: Locate and remove oil fill cap

Open the hood and locate the oil fill cap. Remove the cap and set it aside.

Step 4: Remove oil drain plug

Under the car, locate the oil drain plug. Set a drain pan beneath the plug. Use a drain pan designed to hold twice the capacity of oil in the engine's crankcase. Once your drain pan is in place, remove the plug and set it someplace safe. It's a good idea to replace your drain plug gasket. Visually inspect the drain plug to make sure it's in good shape. If it's not, replace that as well.

Do It Right: The oil drain plug will likely be tough to remove. Using a breaker bar will give you added torque and will help get stubborn drain plugs off.

Step 5: Clean and replace drain plug

Once the draining oil has slowed to a drip, clean and replace the drain plug. If your plug includes a crush washer, replace it with a new one. Tighten the plug to manufacturer's specifications.

Step 6: Loosen and remove old filter

Locate the oil filter and slide your drain pan underneath it. Most conventional spin-on filters are easily accessed from under the vehicle, but some use a remote mount and are accessed in the engine compartment. Remove the spin-on filter as a unit by hand or using a filter wrench if needed. Make sure the old seal came off with the old filter. If it didn't, you'll need to remove it before installing the new filter.

With a cartridge-type filter, you'll remove the cover and take out the filter itself.

Step 7: Wipe down filter mounting area

Use a clean shop towel or lint-free cloth to wipe down the filter mounting area. It's possible that there's some debris or part of the seal from the previous filter.

Step 8: Lubricate the filter

For a spin-on canister filter: Lubricate the seal before putting it on.

Turn the filter until the filter base makes snug contact with the mounting plate. Then tighten another 1/2 to 3/4 turn. For a cartridge-type filter: Lubricate the O-ring and install it around the filter cap. Insert the new filter and tighten the cover to the manufacturer's specifications

Step 9: Remove drain pan

Once your drain plug and filter are tightened properly, remove the drain pan from underneath your vehicle. Lower your vehicle

Step 10: Lower your vehicle

Remove your jack stands and lower your vehicle.

Step 11: Refill oil

Using your funnel, refill your oil to the proper level.

Step 12: Check dipstick, replace cap, and close hood

After you've refilled your oil, wait about five minutes, then check your dip stick to make sure you've added enough.

Once you're sure the oil level is where it needs to be, replace the cap and close the hood.

Step 13: Start your vehicle and check oil level

Start up your vehicle and check for any leakage underneath.

Turn off your vehicle and check the oil level one more time now that the new oil has cycled through the engine. Some filters can hold as much as half a quart of oil, and it might need to be topped off.

Step 14: Recycle used oil

Visit your local Auto Parts store, where they can recycle your used oil and oil filter for you.

Step 15: Reset oil change indicator

Your vehicle may have an oil reset indicator that will require a reset. Check the manufacturer's specifications for your vehicle to be sure, and then take note of your vehicle's mileage so you'll know when to change your oil and filter again.