

Maintain Batteries

Battery maintenance is a service that some lube shop operators swear by — and some avoid altogether. However, if you are thinking of adding battery maintenance to your service menu, here is a list of do's and don'ts.

Do's:

- Whenever working around batteries, make sure to wear proper eye, hand and clothing protection.
- Check the terminals where the battery cables connect to be sure they are tight and free of corrosion. If corrosion is present, clean the terminals.
- Lubricate terminals with a dab of petroleum jelly to keep cables clean and free from corrosion longer.
- Always disconnect the negative cable first and reconnect it last. Charge battery in a well-ventilated area.
- Make sure the battery is firmly secured to its mounting bracket. An unsecured battery that shifts around can become damaged, and possibly cause short circuits.
- In batteries other than those that are "maintenance free," periodically check the fluid level. If the fluid is low, add only distilled water to top it off. If no fluid is detectable, you may want to replace the battery rather than fill it, as batteries in this condition will usually fail very soon.
- Always remember to clean the battery case. Dirt conducts electricity, which can discharge the battery. Battery cases can be cleaned with a solution of baking soda dissolved in warm water. Wet the case and agitate with a nylon bristle brush. Rinse well with plain water.
- Batteries come in many different sizes. When replacing a car battery, make sure you choose the right size for the vehicle. When it comes to car batteries, bigger is not always better.

Don'ts:

- If you suspect that a battery is frozen, do not charge it, as it may explode. One visual sign that a battery has frozen is that the sides are bowed out. This condition is not repairable, and the battery will need to be replaced as soon as possible.
- If you need to charge a battery, switch the charger to a low-charge setting. Most chargers have this feature.
- Never lean over a battery when charging, testing, or jump-starting the engine.
- Don't disconnect battery cables while engine is running (the battery acts as a filter).

- Don't let the battery get totally discharged. Most car batteries get their power from lead cells submerged in electrolyte and these cells can be damaged when the battery is totally discharged.



- Don't let the battery get hot or the electrolyte boil while charging.
- Don't charge a dead battery with a car's alternator. An alternator is not designed to function as a charger, and it may be damaged or have a shortened life as a result. ♠