

# HOW TO CHANGE YOUR CAR'S OIL

Unless your car's oil filter and/or oil drain plug is impossible to reach, you can save money by changing your oil and oil filter yourself (your car's manual should tell you how much oil to get and **how often to change your oil**). You don't need to be a mechanic to learn **how to change your oil** – it simply takes being able to identify certain parts of the car and acquiring the right equipment to do the job. From a top-level view, the oil change process involves a few procedures including: draining the existing oil out of your engine, replacing certain equipment (i.e. – oil filter), adding oil, ensuring there are no leaks, and quality testing.

To start your DIY oil change, warm up your engine for 2 or 3 minutes so the gunk gets churned up and can flow out of the engine easily. You don't want the engine so hot that you burn yourself. When it's slightly warm to the touch, shut off the engine.

Then, complete the following steps to change your car's oil:

1. Look under your car to find the drain plug.

The *drain plug* is a large nut or plug located under the oil pan at the bottom of the engine. If you can't reach your oil drain plug easily, you'll have to either crawl under your car to reach it or jack up the car.



2. Place a container under the oil drain plug.  
You want this container to catch the oil, so make sure it's big enough.
3. Unscrew the oil drain plug.  
Protect your hand with a rag or some paper towels, and be ready to move your hand out of the way. The oil now drains out of your engine into the container.
4. Remove the cap from the oil filler hole at the top of your engine and unscrew the oil filter, using a wrench if you can't do it by hand.  
To unscrew the filter, twist it counterclockwise. The filter will have oil in it, so be careful not to spill it when you remove it. If any remnants of the filter's rubber seal remain on your engine, remove them.
5. Empty the oil from the filter into a drain pan.  
After the filter is empty, wrap it in newspaper and set it aside to take to a recycling center with your old oil.
6. Open a new bottle of oil and dip a finger into it.  
Use the oil to moisten the gasket on the top of the new oil filter.

7. Screw the new filter into the engine where the old one was.  
Follow directions on the filter, or turn it gently by hand until it “seats” and then give it another three-quarter turn.
8. Wipe around the place where the oil drain plug goes.  
Do this step only after all the oil has drained out.
9. Replace the oil drain plug and use an adjustable wrench to tighten it.  
If your vehicle uses an oil drain plug gasket, make sure the old one has been removed and lay a new gasket on the pan before you replace the plug.
10. Use a funnel to pour all but 1 quart of the fresh oil into the oil filler hole.  
Pour slowly to allow the oil time to run down.
11. Replace the oil filler cap and run the engine for 30 to 60 seconds.  
Check for leaks from the oil drain plug and around the filter.
12. Shut off the engine and wait 5 to 10 minutes for the oil to settle into the oil pan, and then **check the oil level** again.  
Remove the oil dipstick, wipe it with a clean, lint-free rag, and shove it back in. Pull it out again and check it.
13. Keep adding oil a little at a time.  
Check the stick after each addition until you reach the “Full” line on the dipstick.
14. Remove the drain pan from under the vehicle and give the car a test drive.  
Go around the block a couple of times.
15. Let the oil settle down again for 5 to 10 minutes, then recheck the dipstick.  
If it’s still at “Full,” you’re good to go!

You have successfully learned how to change your oil! As a final step, dispose of the old oil by taking it to an auto parts store or other oil-recycling center.