

GETTING CHARGED UP ABOUT BATTERIES - PART 4

(See January for Part 1, February for Part 2 & April for part 3)

IMPORTANT NOTE: Many older British classic cars had a positive ground electrical system. Use the instructions in this series of articles accordingly. These instructions apply to an electrical system that has a negative ground.

8. HOW DO I PROPERLY STORE A CAR BATTERY?

Batteries naturally self-discharge while in storage and sulfation will occur over time. Cold will slow the process down and heat will speed it up. Here are five steps to store your batteries which will protect them from sulfation and premature failure.

- A. Physically inspect for damaged cases, remove any corrosion, and clean the battery.
- B. Check the electrolyte levels and add distilled water as required, don't overfill.
- C. Fully charge the battery slowly at a moderate rate.
- D. Store the battery in a cool dry place, but not below 10 degrees F.
- E. Depending on the ambient temperature, periodically test the state-of-charge using a digital voltmeter. In the case of a non-sealed battery, use a temperature compensating hydrometer. If the battery is less than 80% charged, recharge the battery using the method described in the previous installment. A good alternative would be to connect an automatic (voltage regulated) "trickle" charger with a float mode. Don't buy a super cheap one of these as their craftsmanship is questionable. A good float charger will keep you from overcharging your battery.

9. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MYTHS ABOUT BATTERIES?

- A. Storing a battery on a concrete floor will discharge it.
Modern lead acid battery cases are better sealed, so external leakage causing discharge is no longer a problem.
- B. Driving a car will fully charge a battery.
There are a number of factors affecting an alternator's ability to charge a battery. The greatest factors are how much current from the alternator is diverted to the battery to charge it, how long the current is available and temperature. Generally, running the engine at idle or short "stop and go trips", or at night, will not recharge the battery.
- C. A battery will not explode.
While spark retarding vent caps help, recharging a battery produces hydrogen and oxygen gasses and explosions can occur. Work on batteries in a well-ventilated area.
- D. Maintenance-free batteries never require electrolyte.
In hot climates, the electrolyte is "vaporized" due to the high under-hood temperatures. Non-sealed batteries are recommended in hot climates so they can be refilled with distilled water.

Happy Motoring.....Ron Couturier