



NAPA Know How

FLUID LEVELS

Keeping the proper fluid levels in your car is vital to maintaining the engine's longevity and your personal safety. A low coolant level is one of the most destructive things to an engine, and low washer fluid can present a dangerous situation. A quick check under the hood is all it takes to ensure that your car has the proper fluid levels.

CHECKING COOLANT

Open the hood of the car and locate the coolant overflow bottle. It is a clear plastic reservoir next to the radiator, with a hose connecting the two. On the side of the reservoir, there are markings that show full and low levels. If the level of the liquid is below the low marking, you need more coolant.

CHECKING BATTERY LEVEL

Many batteries have a condition indicator, visible in a window on the top of the battery. Usually, blue = condition OK; red = add distilled water; white = charging necessary. If yours shows different colors, check the owner's manual or label on the battery for further information. If the battery needs more fluid, pour in a little at a time until the level is near the top of the battery grids. Do not over-fill. Always use distilled water not tap or filtered water.

CHECKING THE OIL

Under normal driving conditions, you should change your oil every 3,000 to 4,000 miles.

Park your car on level ground and turn the engine off. Open the hood of your car and secure it with the prop rod. Remove the dipstick and wipe it clean. Put the dipstick back into the tube that you removed it from. Remove the dipstick again and check the level of your motor oil on the stick. If the level is below the minimum indicator, add oil to your car.

Check the color of the oil on the dipstick. Motor oil is usually a light clear fluid but will darken under normal conditions. If the oil is black, it should be changed along with the oil filter. If the oil is light brown, this could indicate a coolant leak into the crank case.

Feel the oil on the dipstick. If the oil feels gritty, change the oil.

Smell the dipstick. If the oil has an odor of gas, it could indicate that the engine fuel systems needs repair.

CHECKING THE BRAKE FLUID

Find your power steering fluid reservoir and brake fluid reservoir. They are usually located on top of the engine and are labeled. Open the cap on each and check the fluid level on the dipstick that is attached to the underside of the cap. If either of these fluids are low, you should have the car serviced at NAPA AutoCare Center soon because it could be a sign of a larger problem.

CHECKING THE TRANSMISSION FLUID

Check the level of your automatic transmission fluid. Pull out the transmission fluid dipstick located at the back of the engine near the firewall. Wipe it off, replace it and pull it out again. Check the level against the markings at the bottom of the dipstick. A low level should be addressed immediately with a trip to a transmission specialist. Check the color of the fluid; it should be clear pink. Any darkness warrants a fluid change.

IMPORTANT TIPS

- Never open the radiator cap on a hot engine. Allow it to cool for 15 to 20 minutes before opening.

- Your car should be running when you check the transmission fluid level. Set the emergency brake and put the car in park when checking under the hood of a car that has the engine running.
- Only dispose of used motor oil and filters at authorized locations.
If you prefer, bring your car to your local NAPA AutoCare Center and they can change your oil for you.