

Do's and Don'ts for Model T Owners - Collected by Tim Juhl

- Scott Conger - Advice that will save you large sums of money, time and frustration:

1. Buy the Model T bible - It has the answers to most of your questionings.
2. Never remove the starter until the bendix is removed (it will not clear the mag ring and you will damage the mag if you attempt to remove everything as a single assembly)
3. Never touch the mag post (on top of the transmission) with any kind of battery voltage (either directly or through inadvertant mix-up at the terminal block). Doing so will nearly always demagnetize the magnets on the flywheel and render the magneto useless.

- Donnie Brown -

While most oils are good to use in a T, "NEVER" use any oil that has graphite in it. It will short out the mag, and since it seeps into the pores of the cast iron, it is almost impossible to get clean enough, to not cause problems later.

- Doug Keppler -

When disassembling the car for restoration DO index all bolts and hardware by placing them in labeled ziplock bags or such

- Henry K. Lee -

1. Never operate a Model T with it's engine running and no power to the generator, Unless you like to see solder spit out and burn up a good generator core.
2. Never trust an old Model T running without putting large blocks of wood in front and rear of the cars rear wheels, unless you have nothing else better to do for live entertainment.

- Ben Umberger -

Do Personally inspect the Wishbone where it joins the transmission. Those 2 bolts MUST be Wired to each other (NOT cotter Keyed). There is nothing on the other end of those bolts to keep them from backing out.

- Rod Barrett -

Always put the timer lever ALL the way up before turning the engine off and check it before starting again.

- Dean Kiefer - Never go to a Model T Swap Meet short on cash thinking "I am only going to look".

- Dave Hanlon -

1. Never ever take for granted that you have ample stopping distance...you don't !!
2. Check your tire pressure every time BEFORE you drive your T.
3. Oil and grease are your friends, if you're not sure...lube it again. Familiarize yourself with all the points of lubrication.
4. For a small fee, I will write you a receipt for whatever price you want, to tell your wife that you paid for any given part !!

- Bob Coiro -

If it's loose, tighten it; if it creaks, oil it; if it squeaks, grease it; if it scrapes, shim it; if it rattles, adjust it; if it's wet, wipe it; if it's dry, polish it; if it drips... well, it's supposed to drip; leave that alone.

- Steve Jelf -

1. Visit link <<http://dauntlessgeezer.com/DG80.html>>
2. Visit link <<http://dauntlessgeezer.com/DG79.html>>
3. Extra Oil, Gas and Coolant - don't leave home without them!

- Charles Weisgerber -

On a traditional Starter equipped T, the floor mounted starter switch is always live. Be careful where you step getting into the car

- Stephen D Heatherly -

Always make sure you have gas in the tank. It's really embarrassing when your family catches you walking up the street to get the gas can. :-)

- James M. Riedy -

DON'T put grease into the front spindles even if they have zerk fittings (they should not be there) if you do have them I would replace with the proper oilers.

DO put oil into the spindles they are not drilled all the way through and the oil needs to creep down the spindle bolt to the lower areas. Myself I use chainsaw bar oil for oiling all suspension parts it's tacky and tends not to just run right through.

- Stan Howe Helena

A Ruckstell and a good carburetor are two of the best things you can do to make your T more drivable. A good timer and coils will amaze you. Check the thrust washers in the rear end.

- Mark Gregush

Don't mess with the coils if they are working, unless you know what you are doing.

- KEP -DO put motor oil in the engine. DON'T put vegetable oil in an engine. A guy did that. It wasn't that good for it.

DON'T think that you have to have the front wheel bearings & spindles set up so that they tighten going forwards. Had to talk someone out of doing that. They're supposed to loosen. It's backwards to all other cars you may have worked on.

- Allan Bennett -

DO keep close watch on clincher tyre pressures, 55-60 pounds, so they don't move on the rim and cut the bead.

- James J. Lyons III -

1. Keep it stock as Henry designed and intended. You will spend more time on the road and less time diagnosing issues.

2. Drive it like a Model T (25 - 28 MPH) the car will last longer and they are a death trap at faster speeds.

- James G Fisher III -

When showing and explaining a running engine, Never, Never Ever, point to and touch the spark plug top. I know it's shiny and cool looking but don't do it. I've been hit 3x now each time it was explaining how the engine worked while running.

- Richard Williams -

Like James from Georgia said LOL Never touch that spark plug with the engine running. Looks like you wouldn't have to be told that but I to have done it several times. It will melt the filling in your teeth.

- Kim R. Wynn -

Remember where your belt buckle is touching if you do brush against the spark plugs while the engine is running. The belt buckle area will complete the circuit very quickly. I watched my grandfather check for ignition issues on Model Ts by grabbing the spark plug wire when the engine was running. He was one tough old bird!

- RJ Walworth -

Don't buy a Model T if you don't know how to fix things

- Marty Bufalini -

RJ: In my case, too late!!!

- Chadwick Azevedo -

1. When doing a restoration never save your receipts.

2. Whether you use your left or right hand never wrap your thumb around the crank.

- Bob Coiro -

Steve Jelf, who makes some of the best "How-To" videos you ever saw, wrote this article on how to hand-crank a Model T without breaking your arm. -The two videos at the bottom of the page will make a believer of you:

<<http://dauntlessgeezer.com/DG101.html>>

- Kenneth W DeLong -

Henry sold over 15 million so don't start off thinking you have a better idea!

- Jim Derocher -

Put a tire chock in place before starting

- R.V. Anderson -

Always bear in mind that for every expert telling you how to do something, there is another expert telling you the exact opposite.

- Tom McGoldrick -

Always take more pictures of everything than you think you need to. When you end up taking something apart you might have a reference when you put it back together.

- James Lang -

Check oil and water every time you start your engine. Not just once a day

- Alan Pfau -

I think we should add that if you break down a ways from home tow it back very slowly, maybe with spark plugs removed. Better yet, find a trailer to borrow. Our old T's don't have a neutral in the more conventional sense of the word.

- Willis Jenkins -

Three of us pushed our T a half a block back home when I had a fuel problem. I removed the spark plugs. While slowly pushing you can hear the pistons going up & down. Yes, compared to other vehicles of the time, this car is totally different!

- Tim Juhl - Responding to what Alan and Willis said about pushing or towing a T, I've been told to never tow a Model T any distance or risk damaging it. The best option is to load it on a flatbed.

- Scott Conger -

Towing a Model T should only be done for a VERY short distance ie: a city block or less, tow VERY slowly in high gear with plugs removed. Otherwise never flat tow a T. Never tow or pull by the front axle. To do so risks turning it into a Vanadium Steel Pretzel. Always wrap a recovery sling around behind the front spring mount on the frame.

- Chris Brancaccio -

You can never check your engine oil level too often. After I burned out my first connecting rod I check the oil before I leave in the morning and one other time during the day usually at lunch time.

- Bob Coiro -

The Model T Ford's crankshaft is known for being the car's Achilles' Heel. -To avoid breaking yours, don't lug the car uphill. Instead, downshift and accept the slower ascent.

- Bob Coiro -

How to clean a Ford roller timer:

- 1.) Get a roll of paper towels and a spray can of WD-40 and keep them where you can reach them easily.
- 2.) Remove the cotter-pin that prevents the push-pull rod from falling out of the tab on the timer housing.
- 3.) Loosen the bolt that holds the flat, spring-steel arm that holds the timer housing against the engine and let the arm dangle. As you do this, hold the timer housing with your free hand to prevent it from falling and swinging into something that might damage it.
- 4.) Without disconnecting any wires, spray the inside of the timer housing with WD-40 and gently wipe it out with paper towels. -Repeat until the timer housing is clean.
- 5.) Make sure the wires on the four terminals on the timer housing are nice and tight.
- 6.) Let the timer housing hang from its wires and use the engine's hand-crank to bring the roller part of the timer to the top of its orbit.
- 7.) Spray the roller liberally with WD-40 and wipe it carefully and gently with paper towels until clean.
- 8.) Generously lube the boss of the roller with your favorite type of oil. Some guys use motor oil, some thin out the motor oil with 3-in-1 oil or use straight 3-in-one oil. -Some guys actually pack the timer housing with grease and get good results that way. -If you don't have a favorite, just use motor oil.
- 9.) Insert the spark-timing push-pull rod back into its little drilled tab.
- 10.) Place the timer housing back in its circular bed on the engine and hold it in place while, with your other hand, you swing the flat, spring-steel arm back up and put the little ball in the little socket in the center of the timer housing.
- 11.) Tighten the bolt that holds the flat, spring-steel arm to the engine.
- 12.) Replace the cotter-pin so the push-pull rod won't fall out of the hole in the tab on the timer housing.
- 13.) Make sure the timer housing can rotate easily when you operate the spark lever.
- 14.) Open the little oil hatch on the timer housing, put a few drops of oil in there and hand-crank the engine a few rotations to spread the oil around inside the timer.

- Don from Conroe, TX -

Time it so UPS ships parts to your house on days when your wife's not home.

- Richard Grzegorowicz -

Speaking of king pins, have you ever taken yours out? easy winter project, the groove over the years fills in with crud, and becomes the same size as the bolt, it self, thus keeping the bar and chain oil from lubing the entire length to the bottom bushing.

- Tim Juhl - Use a dremel to grind a shallow groove from the oil hole on the kingpins down to where it enters the top brass spindle bushing. This will help oil get to where it is needed.

- Robert G. Hester Jr. -

If you drive in parades set the hand lever in neutral. This way, if you forget and take your foot off the low pedal she won't lurch into high and take out the boy scout troop marching in front of you or stall the engine which will be unhandy if you don't have a starter.

- Michael Pawelek -

Never check a running coil with your tongue.....

- John Wright -

This great stuff and this newbie really appreciates it. I'm glad you told me not to check the coil with my tongue, I should know that my finger is a much better tool!

- Dave Hanlon -

DON'T forget your cell phone !!

- James A. Golden -

One more - never start the engine with the transmission inspection cover removed to see what is happening in there.

- Ted Ashman wrote two books on most of these and many more good ideas.

- Corey Walker -

Always install cotter pins immediately. I've left them out before when I didn't have one on hand thinking I'd remember before I drove the car. Problem is, I forget sometimes. A few years ago I put a motor together and the crank pulley was tight. I put it in and connected everything but the fan and radiator but I wanted to hear it run so I started it. Ran good then a terrible noise up front. Then I remembered, a couple days before I was going to remember to put a cotter pin through the crank pulley pin before I started it. I straightened out the pin but the pulley fit loose after getting jarred around.

- Albert Belling -

Drive like you have no brakes.

- Allan Bennett -

I'd second Albert's "drive like you have no brakes."

Or at least drive like you are in a 18 wheeler, and allow commensurate braking distances.

- Max Lindsay -

Important advice from Scott Conger about towing!!!! Lucky I didn't wipe out an engine that way.

As a newbie, your chances of stalling and not being able to restart are high!!! Never tow long distance or at high speed!!!

- George Barclay -

Know for sure if the thrust washers in the rear axle have been replaced. Should be brass, not babbitt.

- Brooks Schlieben -

Be patient and have a good sense of humor when answering seemingly inane or stupid questions from curious onlookers. Some folks genuinely don't know; others are just having a little fun. Either way, impart a little knowledge.

- Kenneth W Delong -

Wave at everyone as you might ask them to push later. Bud.

- Michael Pawelek -

Don't use your bare fingers to pull out birds and small animals that have been sucked into the carburetor. It can be very messy.....

- James A. Golden -

Rule 1 - never tailgate another vehicle.

- Dave Hanlon -

Rule 2 - Don't text and drive your T...in fact, hold on with the hand not working the spark or throttle, for dear life !!

As far as brakes go...Always know, the little old lady at the stop sign is GOING to pull out in front of you.

- Allen Banks -

Never enter a roadster on the drivers side....you'll look stupid.

- Scott Lay.....

Yeah I'll second Allen Banks. I'm 6'2" and with the top up it's pretty funny to watch me get in. I ALWAYS use the right side door.

- John Noonan -

Haven't seen this one posted yet, but can save you some heartache. :-)

Whenever working on the trans/bands with the hogshead on, be sure to completely fill the pit of hell. I use a single twin bed sheet which seems to be plenty to make sure nothing goes south. By using just one piece, you don't have to worry about counting rags to make sure you retrieved them all.

- Max Lindsay -

I like Kenneth's comment and had my own version from when I was riding my bike daily - Say hi to everyone. They may be the one that discover your body later!

- William L Vanderburg -

The Model T Bible actually shows a method of removing the starter with bendix attached.

I personally have never done it, but it's in there.

- James M. Riedy -

Always pull the key out of the ignition when working inside the transmission. One little bump and it could drop in.

- Bob Coiro -

I once labored under the misconception that one could effect better braking action and, at the same time, redistribute the concentrated wear on the transmission brake drum by applying not only the brake pedal, but also the reverse pedal and/or the clutch pedal. -By virtue of the wisdom imparted by others on this forum, I've since been disabused of that erroneous notion. -See, it turns out the brake drum is much beefier than are the reverse and low-gear drums, and using those for braking could cause them to crack.

- Harold Schwendeman -

Do not install any modern fuel filter in a "pressureless" gravity feed fuel system.

- Cameron Smythe -

One thing I have learnt and is important is always check your hand brake pawl for wear as while idling away in park the vibration of car can pop the pawl off if badly worn and jump your transmission into top gear!

And in Australia our clutch pedal on our every day cars are on our left foot so if you are new to a T learn the pedals before attempting to drive or you will hit first gear and drive right out the back of garage!

- Dave Hanlon -

DON'T run aluminum pistons with too little clearance...unless you want a neat little ashtray !!

- Tim Juhl -

How about these?

- 1.) If your car has wood-spoke wheels you should take corners and sharp curves easy so as to not put too much side load on the wheels. It's rare, but they have been known to break. (Steve Jelf Concur)
- 2.) Don't drive without the little screw installed that holds the cap on your steering gear cover. Without it the cap can come loose and the steering wheel fall off.
- 3.) When installing an engine, don't forget to put in the oil pan arm wood blocks!
- 4.) Increasing fluid level in the rear differential is the result of engine oil making it's way down the drive shaft. If this happens, drain the differential and fill with lube of the proper viscosity - thinned out differential fluid doesn't do the job it's supposed to do and migrates to places it shouldn't be.
- 5.) If securing a Model T in a trailer, only attach to the axles just inboard of the spindles (front) and hubs (rear) and don't overdo it. Attaching to the center can bend the axle. Another good place to attach to is around the point where the springs attach to the frame.