

A Word about Tires for Your Model A

Tires, all of our Model A's have them. When it comes time to replace them, the question that comes up is what is available and which ones should I buy. As we all know, the Model A Ford passenger cars and light commercial vehicles came from the factory with 21 inch wheels for 1928 thru 1929 model years and 19 inch wheels for the later 1930's and 31's.

Replacement tires for the original wheels are readily available. Three of the original suppliers of tires, Firestone, Goodrich, and Goodyear are currently being made as reproductions. Lucas Tire also makes tires for Model A's. All are good quality and will give good service. Goodyear Tires are probably the closest in size to the originals. If you have a 30-31 with side mount fenders, Goodyear Tires will fit the fender well better than some of the other brands. Personally, I like the appearance of the Goodyear Tire with the Diamond tread pattern.

Up until just a few years ago, the only choice of tire construction for the original size Model A wheels was bias ply tires but now we have an option. Excelsior is making radial tires in sizes that fit the Model A. Owners who are using them report that they have experienced improved handling and better ride quality than original type bias ply tires. Radial tires track better with a much less tendency to follow grooves in the road. Do your research as some owners have reported that one size larger than the original size listed for your Model A are actually closer in dimensions to the original factory installed bias ply tires. Excelsior tires do cost more but they are a premium tire. Excelsior Radial Tires, available only as blackwalls, can be purchased from Coker Tire Company.

Thru the years a lot of owners have converted their Model A's to 16 inch wheels. The wider tread of the 16 inch tire will track better over uneven surfaces and the lower air pressure that is required will offer a little softer ride. There are many choices of 16 inch tires, both in bias ply and radial construction. For most applications, bias ply tires will work well and offer good service but if you are looking for better handling and ride, radial tires should be your choice. Radials are more expensive but the ride and handling is superior.

For normal around the town driving, bias ply tires on your original Model A wheels may be all you will need but for more serious driving and long distance touring, 16 inch wheels and radial tires are something you may want to consider. When buying new tires, be sure to also purchase new tubes and rim liners or as some refer to as "rimstrips". Do not buy flaps as they are not required with Model A wheels. If you are using radial tires, buy the thicker tubes especially designed for radial tires, not the thin ones that are made for bias ply tires.



Firestone Bias Ply



Goodyear Bias Ply



Excelsior Radial Tire

Tech Tip

As a part of replacing the tires on your Model A the alignment of the front wheels should also be checked and corrected as necessary. Incorrect alignment not only detracts from drivability but can also greatly accelerate the wear of the treads and shorten the life of the tires. As part of checking alignment, inspect the steering linkage to be sure the tie rod and drag link ends are tight and the steering box is properly adjusted. With proper front wheel alignment and rotating the tires occasionally, a set of good quality tires you should last 20K miles or more.