

## The Best Oil for my Model A

It is time to change the oil in my Model A so I first need to buy some oil to put in the engine after I drain the old oil. Now the BIG QUESTION is “What oil should I use in my engine”. If you ask ten Model A owners what is the best oil to use, you will probably get ten different answers. I am no different and will give you my opinion but I also will tell you why I have come to this conclusion.

Some say unless a particular brand of oil is used, their Model A Engine will not perform well and will prematurely wear out. Oil that is available today is much better than what was available when our cars were new so almost anything you use will be fine for your engine. The main thing is to use the proper viscosity of oil and to change it on a regularly.

For most of our cars, especially those that have babbitt bearings, multi-weight 10/40 or 20/50 viscosity oil is a good choice. These oils will flow when cold but will be thick enough to protect the bearings when hot. If most of your driving is short trips around town then 10/40 should be the choice. For those of us who also use our Model A for touring, I like to use 20/50.

I also recommend using straight petroleum based oil and not a synthetic or synthetic blend. The internal clearances of a Model A engine are not as close as modern engines and synthetic oils tend to pass the rings and valve guides more easily than petroleum based oils. Model A's also tend to leak a little oil and when using synthetics this often becomes more of a problem.

Is it absolutely necessary to use oil that contains zinc (ZDDP) additive? No, when your Model A was new, there was no zinc in the oil. Zinc was added after the new Cadillac and Oldsmobile over head valve, high speed engines were first produced in 1949. Soon after these engines were first placed in service, there was an unusual amount of camshaft failures where the cam lobes would prematurely wear down. It was found that with the higher valve spring pressures required for these new high revving over head valve engines, the cam lobes would start to scuff and round off. Adding zinc to the oil eliminated this problem. While using oil with zinc will not do any harm, Model A Engines have such low valve



spring pressures, scuffing was never a problem. You will find that most brands of 10/40 or 20/50 petroleum based oils will also contain zinc.

We cannot always buy oil for our Model A at a lot of auto parts stores. Most oil that is being sold is the lighter weight synthetic or synthetic blend oils. You can usually find the petroleum based 10/40 or 20/50 oil at most high performance or Speed Shops. Oil for your Model A is also available on line under such names as Lucas Hot Rod and Classic Car Oil and Shell “Classic” Motor Oil. If you are on the road and cannot find the correct oil, try a truck stop. Oil formulated for use in Diesel Engines will also work just fine in your Model A.

Petroleum based multi grade oil will provide good protection for most of our Model A's however, if you have a highly modified engine, ask the builder what oil should be used.

Happy Motoring in your Model A.



## Tech Tip

### How often should you change the oil?

If you only use your Model A just occasionally, no more than a hundred miles or so per year, you should change the oil at least once every 2 years. If you use your Model A regularly for club outings and touring, you should change the oil every 1000 to 2000 miles. These suggested intervals can be extended if you have installed an oil filter.

Today's modern engine oils have detergents to keep dirt in suspension and additives to reduce wear and corrosion. The most important thing is to change the oil. It is best to change the oil when the engine is fully warmed up. This will help remove moisture and dirt that may have accumulated. Allowing moisture to accumulate in your engine will cause corrosion and promote the formation of sludge. Remember, a clean engine is a happy engine.