

The Best Operating Temperature for Your Model A Ford

Years ago, most Model A owners did not give much thought to the temperature of their engine just as long as the radiator did not boil over. Henry did not include a temperature gauge in the Model A so unless an accessory temperature gauge had been installed, the only way the driver knew if the engine was running too hot was the appearance of steam from the radiator cap or water on the windshield when the radiator started to boil over.

Today a lot of owners have installed a temperature gauge that allows easy monitoring of the engine temperature. This is especially important for those who use their cars for long distance touring.

A temperature gauge is also very useful for knowing if your Model A is running too cold. On a cold day, especially when using a heavy duty radiator, the engine may not come up to a good operating temperature. Now, you may ask "What is the problem with the engine running too cold? As long as the radiator is not boiling over, that should be good enough." Model A engines run best if the coolant temperature is between approximately 160 and 180 degrees. The carburetor can be run a little leaner which promotes more complete combustion and a cleaner more efficient engine. It is also very important, the oil will get completely warmed up so the accumulated moisture within the engine will be evaporated. Allowing moisture to accumulate inside the engine will promote the formation of sludge and cause corrosion.

Along with a temperature gauge, a thermostat is strongly recommended. Good quality 160 deg. thermostats are available from most parts suppliers. Now, some people say that the addition of a thermostat will make the engine overheat. This is not true. If there is a problem with your Model A running too hot, adding a thermostat will not make the problem worse. The problem is with the cooling system itself and not because a thermostat had been installed.



Temperature gauge with "short sweep" dial



Thermostat for installation in the upper radiator hose

A thermostat will help maintain a more even coolant temperature, especially on a cool day. When going uphill, the engine has to work harder and the coolant temperature will increase. When going downhill with little load on the engine, the coolant temperature will go down. A thermostat in the system will help even out these changes in the coolant temperature.

You will find that installing a 160 degree thermostat and a good temperature gauge will allow your Model A engine to warm up quicker after a cold start and operate more efficiently. A good quality temperature gauge will allow you to monitor the temperature of the coolant.

Happy motoring in your Model A.



Water outlet with "boss" for installing water temperature sensor

Tech Tip

The best temperature gauge to use

A good quality mechanical gauge is preferred for your Model A. Mechanical gauges are more accurate and have better resolution than most electric gauges. Temperature gauges with a full 270 Deg. sweep of the dial offer a longer scale which makes it a lot easier to see the actual gauge reading. Some gauges have such a short scale you cannot tell if the temperature has changed by just a little or a lot.

Thermo gauges in the radiator cap (Moto-Meters or Thermo Quails) are not of much use. To operate correctly, the sensing bulb must be in the coolant, not just positioned above it. Most of the time, when these devices indicate the engine is running hot it is too late as the coolant is already boiling.

Knowing the temperature of your engine is a good thing. If you do not already have one, install a temperature gauge in your Model A.



Mechanical temperature gauge with a 270 degree "sweep" dial