

Two Helpful Tools

by Tom Endy 2022

A Model A runs better when the battery polarity to the coil is correct. Back in the old days the polarity was detected with a lead pencil. It was great sport for high school auto shop teachers to demonstrate to the class how it was done, then hand the pencil to the class clown and have him try it. Today there is a device available that will tell the polarity a lot easier and with little chance of an electric shock. It plugs into the top of the distributor, start the engine and one of two LEDs will be lit indicating correct or incorrect polarity. If the polarity is incorrect it is a simple matter of swapping the two coil primary wires around. Bratton's sells the device, part number 17140, \$27.95. I purchased one a number of years ago and at a club function we checked about 20 Model A's and found about half had the polarity reversed and the owners were not even aware of it.

The other handy device indicates the health of the ignition system. What is desired is a strong healthy spark. This device plugs into the top of the distributor the same as the other device. Start the engine and move the slider inside the device down and observe the spark leaping across the gap. You should be able to move the slider all the way down to the bottom with the engine continuing to run and with a long spark. Bratton's sells the device, part number 17150, \$19.95. If you think you are not getting spark to the top of the distributor an easy test is to move the slider down about 1/16 of an inch and hit the starter with the ignition turned on and if you are getting spark you will be able to see it jumping the gap.

A wooden stick is supplied with the device to move the slider. Don't try to do it with anything metal.

These are both good tools to have in your traveling tool bag under the seat. A trouble light and a by-pass cable are also good things to have along.

