

Oil Levels and Other Fluids

How do I know when to change my oil?

You don't always need to change your car's oil entirely, sometimes you will need only to perform a top up to keep your car running smoothly. When you need to change your oil, you can do it yourself - it doesn't take long and is quite easy if you have the right tools. Otherwise contact your local workshop and they can do it for you.

Check the oil level and appearance

With the car on a level surface and ideally, when the engine is warm, check the oil level using the dipstick. Your car owner's manual will tell you where to locate the dipstick but on most vehicles, it is easily recognised by its coloured handle (fig 1). Make sure the level is between the minimum and maximum marks on the dipstick (fig 2). If the level is below the maximum mark, top up with the right grade of Shell Helix (fig 3).

When the oil level is below the minimum mark, find out how many kilometres have passed since the last oil change. If you are not sure or don't know, it is advisable to perform a complete oil change. If the mileage is between 4000km and 15000km you will only need to top up your oil. If it is above 15000km you need to change your oil.

There may be a technical problem if your mileage is less than 4000km and the oil level is low. Top up and start measuring the level on a weekly basis, or contact your local workshop for further advice.

If the oil is very black, it is time to change it – ask your garage to use the appropriate grade of Shell Helix. Dark-brown but still transparent is close to needing changing, while slightly brown is normal. If the oil has white specks in it, this that means the engine coolant is mixing with the engine oil because of an internal engine problem. Have your car inspected.

How to change your oil yourself

Changing your car oil is easier that it sounds and also saves you money. In all the whole process shouldn't take longer than 45 minutes. Just make sure that you follow your manufacturer's specific instructions and safety directions.

Firstly, choose the ideal oil for your car from the Shell Helix range - and check you have the necessary tools.

You'll need:

- Shell Helix Engine Oil (4 or 5 litres - check owner's manual)
- New oil filter - check owner's manual
- Safety glasses and rubber gloves
- Plastic container and funnel
- Car jack and jack stands
- Drain plug socket wrench
- Paper towels and a rag
- Oil filter wrench

What you have to do:

1. Prepare the car

The car should be on a level surface with the parking brake on and engine off. If you need space under the car, jack it up and use jack stands to support it. Jacks on their own are very unstable - never get under your car without using jack stands.

2. Unscrew the oil cap

Locate the oil cap (check with the manual to locate it) and unscrew it. This is very important, as a vacuum will not allow all the oil to drain out.

3. Locate the oil drain plug

Get underneath the car and locate the oil drain plug. This is a lone bolt at the bottom of the oil sump.

4. Place the container

Place a container beneath the oil drain plug and unscrew the plug, being careful not to let the plug fall into the container. Do not come in contact with the oil - it can be extremely hot.

5. Drain out the old oil

Allow all the oil to drain out. This can take several minutes.

6. Locate the oil filter

Locate the old oil filter with the help of your car's owner manual. It should be identical to the one you are replacing it with.

7. Remove the old oil filter

Turn the filter wrench anti-clockwise to loosen the oil filter. The filter may be full of oil so take care not to spill any.

8. Prepare the new filter

Clean up the filter seat on the engine and place a light coating of oil on the gasket of the new filter.

9. Install the new filter

Carefully screw the new filter into place by hand, making sure it is not over-tight. Screw back in the oil drain plug and tighten it with the wrench.

10. Fill up with oil

Using the funnel, carefully fill the engine with Shell Helix, avoiding spillages. Measure the oil level with the dipstick after every two litres filled.

11. Check the level is correct

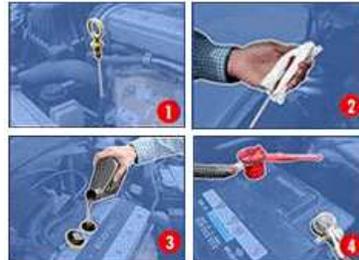
When you have reached the correct level, replace the oil cap. Turn on the engine for ten minutes and then off again. Check the oil level with the dipstick once again - if the level is low, add more oil.

12. Clean up

Clean up all oil spillages on your engine and check for any leaks from the drain plug.

13. Properly dispose of the old oil and filter

Used oil is highly toxic and must never be disposed of with domestic waste. It's illegal to pour used oil into the sewage network. Ensure you safely dispose of your used oil.



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Battery fluid level

Look for the battery and check its appearance. It should be clean, particularly around the terminals (fig 4). Refer to your car's user manual to see how to check and top up the battery fluid level. You may have a sealed-for-life battery that will make this check unnecessary. If you do have to top up the battery, be careful – it contains sulphuric acid, so do not splash the fluid on yourself or the car bodywork.

Other levels

Refer to the car user's manual on how to check and top up the battery, brake fluid (fig 5) and engine coolant levels (fig 6). Regularly checking these levels may not change your car's appearance but is a rejuvenating experience for your vehicle.