

# HOW OFTEN SHOULD I REPLACE MY OIL AND WHY?



**Good Maintenance  
Adds Extra Mileage**



When asked, you may hear answers such as every 3000, 5000 or 7500 miles, or when the vehicle's oil monitor indicates that this service is necessary. It is no wonder consumers are confused. The simplest answer ... well, there is no simple answer! In fact, there is no interval that applies to "most" vehicles. AMRA/MAP has been examining this question for some time. Read on to find out what we feel every motorist needs to know about this subject.

The engine serves as the heart of your vehicle, so changing its oil based on the manufacturer's recommendation is perhaps the single most important thing that you can do to keep your vehicle's engine running longer. However, you must read these recommendations closely to determine the correct interval; the interval that matches your vehicle's operating conditions and your driving habits.

The "Normal" interval listed in the owner's manual applies to vehicles driven under ideal conditions. While you may consider your driving habits and operating conditions quite normal, read the fine print. Some exceptions to "Normal" driving include:



- Frequent short trips (less than 10 miles, especially during cold weather)
- Stop-and-go city traffic driving
- Driving in dusty conditions, on gravel roads, etc.
- Driving at sustained highway speeds during hot weather
- Towing use
- Diesel or turbocharged engine

These conditions commonly appear in the description of "severe service" driving. AMRA/MAP advises that you read your owner's manual to locate the correct interval.

Although each manufacturer offers different intervals and descriptions, you may find that the proper interval for your vehicle and driving conditions could fall somewhere between 3500 and 5000 miles.

## What about the 3000 mile oil change "myth"? Is that wasting natural resources?

Consider these facts:

- Oil requires complex additives and detergents to help prevent corrosion and sludge buildup
- Additives allow oil to flow freely at extremely cold temperatures while also providing protection under extremely hot temperatures
- Testing shows that after 3000 miles the oil itself still lubricates, but the depletion of critical additives may no longer allow the oil to offer the same protection and benefits
- Longer intervals may benefit the environment, but perhaps at the expense of engine life
- Re-refined oils offer an alternative for motorists with concerns about the environment
- Re-refined oils use the remaining lubricating qualities of used oil, and replenish the depleted additives to create oils that meet the quality of new oil



725 E Dundee Road • Suite 206 • Arlington Heights, IL 60004  
847-947-2650 • Fax 202-318-0378 • [www.motorist.org](http://www.motorist.org)

Ask your service provider or visit the “CalRecycle” web site at <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/usedoil/rerefined/> for more information on recycled oils.

## But what about the monitor on my vehicle’s dashboard that tells me when to change the oil or how much oil life remains?

This feature can help avoid wasting natural resources and helps determine the correct interval. Be aware that these monitors use software that simply calculates the oil’s condition based on things such as driving habits, time, mileage, etc. In most cases, these systems do not directly measure the condition of the oil itself and assumes that you are using oil that meets the manufacturer’s specifications.

## So, what is the bottom line?

The correct interval for your vehicle is specific to your vehicle and its use. Use of quality oil and filters provides the best way to ensure that your oil cleans, protects, and lubricates for the length of the listed interval. For further help in finding the correct interval for your vehicle, take your owner’s manual to a reliable service provider and discuss operating conditions and your driving habits. Together, you can determine the proper interval and choose the best type of oil and filter for your vehicle. Whether your vehicle is brand new, has high-mileage, or if you drive outside of the “normal” driving description, determining the proper service interval is simpler than you think.



## For additional, detailed information related to oil, please visit:

### Motor Oil Matters

<http://www.motoroilmatters.org/>

### American Petroleum Institute (API)

<http://www.api.org/>

# Things to Watch For

- » Some of the motor oil components are consumed sacrificially while doing the job of protecting your engine. Foreign contaminants also accumulate in the oil.
- » The correct oil change interval is the one recommended by the engine manufacturer for your individual driving conditions. It is printed in the vehicle owner’s manual.
- » Severe use typically includes stop-and-go driving, frequent high-speed driving and short trips, towing, operating in dusty conditions and operating in cold / hot weather.
- » You should review the severe service definition in your owner’s manual to determine the proper oil drain interval



## Proper Maintenance Helps Extend Vehicle Life!

Your driving type or vehicle usage may affect the maintenance intervals below.

You should follow the manufacturer’s service schedule that best matches your vehicle’s operating conditions.

### Those recommendations may include:

- » Change your engine oil at the vehicle manufacturer’s recommended service interval that matches your vehicle’s operating conditions and your driving habits
- » Check your tire inflation pressure monthly
- » Rotate your tires at the vehicle manufacturer’s recommended service interval or every 6 months/5,000 miles
- » Change the engine air filter annually or when visibly restricted.
- » Inspect Brake System every 12 months/15,000 miles

*Taking the Mystery Out of Maintenance*



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