

New Beetle – Oil Change

by Mike C. -

As many articles as I've written on the air-cooled variety of VW's, it's time I put in some info for you New Beetle owners out there. I admit even though I've owned a New Beetle since 1998, it's taken me awhile to learn the in's, out's, and idiosyncrasies of these wonderful modes of transportation. Why this long? Well, apart from doing oil changes and other minor things, you can basically keep the hood shut (yep, the *front* decklid) and just clean and wax it once in awhile. Yes, the New Beetle, along with VW's other fine autos, is a very reliable, relatively maintenance-free vehicle. But, just like any car out there, you must change the oil regularly to keep the maintenance-free characteristic alive. In this article, I will go into the oil change particulars for the New Beetle. Keep in mind, the procedures will apply (perhaps with minor exceptions) to the Golf and Jetta ('98-up) as well.

OIL:

First of all, let me start by giving you a few pointers. What type of oil you choose to use is up to you. I do recommend that you use 10W-30 oil year round. There are three basic types of oil:

- 100% mineral oil
- Mineral/synthetic blend
- 100% synthetic oil.



100% mineral oil is the least expensive, find it anywhere, and has run many a car past 100,000 miles. You must keep this oil changed regularly, as it tends to break down more quickly than the synthetics. I wouldn't recommend going past 3000 miles with 100% mineral oil.

Mineral/synthetic blend is middle-of-the-road in price and provides a bit better start-up protection than 100% mineral oil.

100% synthetic oils are the most expensive but the best in terms of cold start-up protection, friction reduction, and high temperature resistance (great for you 1.8 turbo folks). My recommendation is that you go no more than 5000 miles between changes with the 100% synthetic. If you choose to go 100% synthetic, let a new car go to its first oil change interval and then switch over. Piston rings are fully seated after the first 20 or so minutes of running, therefore it should be no problem switching when the time comes.

Do use a genuine VW oil filter, as they contain the correct bypass valves and anti-drainback valves so your engine won't see possible long-term damage.

Don't put more than 4.7 quarts of oil in these engines (2.0 and 1.8 both use 4.5 quarts) or you may damage the catalytic converter! This is where it may stop many of you from changing your own oil – don't try to jack the car up anywhere in the middle! The only areas you can jack up your New Beetle without causing serious damage is under the rocker panels, where you would put the scissors-jack. I highly recommend you use ramps and drive the car up on them and then proceed.

Given that, here's what you'll need to do the job:

- Set of ramps
- Oil filter wrench*

- 19mm combo wrench
- 5 Quarts of 10W-30 oil of your choice
- Drain pan

- T-20 Torx driver

- 3/8" ratchet

- 3/8" Drive long extension
- Paper towels or rags

* A specific-fit version can be found at auto parts stores

1. If your New Beetle is hot from the trip, let it cool down for an hour before you work on it. You'll be getting your hands pretty close to the electric fan, and that thing sure doesn't need to come on while you are getting the oil filter out!
2. Get the ramps out, position them carefully, and have a friend help guide you up on them. When you are up there, stop the engine and pull up the parking brake.
3. Open the hood.
4. Get the T-20 torx driver and take out the torx bolts that hold the plastic cover on underneath the front.
5. After you get these out, slide the cover back and take it out. Look up inside the engine compartment. See the oil filter? The radiator hose runs almost directly beneath it.
6. Slide the drain pan under the car.
7. Get your ratchet, put the oil filter wrench on it, and proceed to undo the filter. If it is the first oil change or you don't know who changed the oil before, the oil filter may be pretty tight. There just isn't enough room for one of those "one size fits all" filter wrenches. Once you have the filter loose, pull the wrench off and undo it the rest of the way by hand.
8. Things are getting pretty messy by now, as the oil is dripping off the filter and making things slick.
9. After getting the filter out, get the 19mm combo wrench and undo the oil pan (*drain*) bolt, let the old oil drain in the pan.
10. While it's draining, wipe off the oil filter mounting surface with a paper towel.
11. Get out your new filter and make sure the gasket is there.
12. Lubricate the gasket with motor oil and fill the filter with oil. You can put about a pint or so of oil in there. Any more, and it will just make a mess. What you are doing is helping the engine achieve full oil pressure much more quickly than having to wait for a few precious seconds for the oil filter to fill itself up when you start the engine.
13. Put the new filter on, spin it on until the gasket just makes contact. Then take your oil filter wrench and tighten the filter around one more turn.
14. Wipe the area around the oil drain plug hole and reinstall the drain plug. Don't overtighten here, just make it kinda snug.
15. Now get out from under the car, but don't install the plastic cover yet. Be sure to pull all your tools and drain pan out from underneath.
16. Remove the oil cap and pour four full quarts of oil in (remember, some of it is in the filter if you filled it).
17. Put the oil cap back on and start the engine. Make sure that the oil light goes out and back the car off the ramps.
18. Roll it where you can wash the bottom of the engine. Spray some Simple Green on all the parts that oil got onto and let it sit for a minute and wash it off. This way, you won't get an oily smell from your engine.
19. When you are through, put the plastic cover back on underneath the car. Don't leave it off, as it does direct proper airflow in and around the engine compartment.

20. Let the engine sit a few minutes (car on level ground) and recheck the oil. It should be in the hatched area on the dipstick.

If you decide not to change the oil yourself, at least keep all the above in mind, as the quickie lube places or even the dealerships sometimes leave things off or leave things messy after the work is done. They are particularly bad about getting the oil drain plug and oil filter way too tight. Also, how do you know whether they really put in synthetic oil when you asked for it? Unless you saw it yourself, they may have sneaked one past you. Maybe not, but it is something to think about while you are eating some bratwurst nachos!

Your VW Maniac and tech specialist,
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