

CHANGES

PERHAPS THE MOST BASIC OF AUTOMOTIVE OPERATIONS, SERVICING YOUR COMMODORE IS NO LESS IMPORTANT DESPITE ITS SIMPLICITY WORDS AND PICS BY BEN HOSKING

One of the most basic things you can do to your Commodore, giving your pride and joy a decent service can unlock a few lost horsepower and ensure your engine's longevity for many more trouble-free kilometres. But how many people have never actually serviced their own car, instead preferring to hand it over to a workshop that normally comes with an additional premium for their time? Answer: lots.

Servicing your car shouldn't be seen as a chore but as a way of keeping its performance and protection as high as possible. You also get to know the car on a more intimate level by keeping an eye on the condition of the waste oil, wear on the plugs and generally finding your way around the engine bay.

So let's check out just how easy it is to change your oil and oil filter, put in a new air filter and swap the plugs and leads for fresh ones. **SC**



How do you take your own picture in magazines? Easy, timer!



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STEP 1

I simply headed down to my local Supercheap Auto and picked up the necessary ingredients for a successful service. Now, you don't need to change your air filter, plugs or leads at every service interval like you do your oil and oil filter, but it had been a while for XXX, so we splurged and did everything at once. Valvoline actually sells a cool triple pack consisting of air and oil filters and a free oil tray

STEP 2

Before you start, it is a good idea to let the car run for a few minutes and warm the oil so it flows more freely out of the sump. Be sure to remember to chock your rear wheels before jacking it up.

I didn't have a trolley jack handy, so I just used my factory-supplied scissor jack under the front designated jacking point. Have a quick look under the car to see which side your sump plug is on and jack up the opposite side for better drainage

STEP 3

NEVER work under a car that is simply held up by a jack! I've heard stories about people being crushed and one guy who had his calf muscle removed by a brake disc because the jack failed or the car fell off it. Always use a chassis stand or ramp and check that the car is in gear and the handbrake is engaged

STEP 4

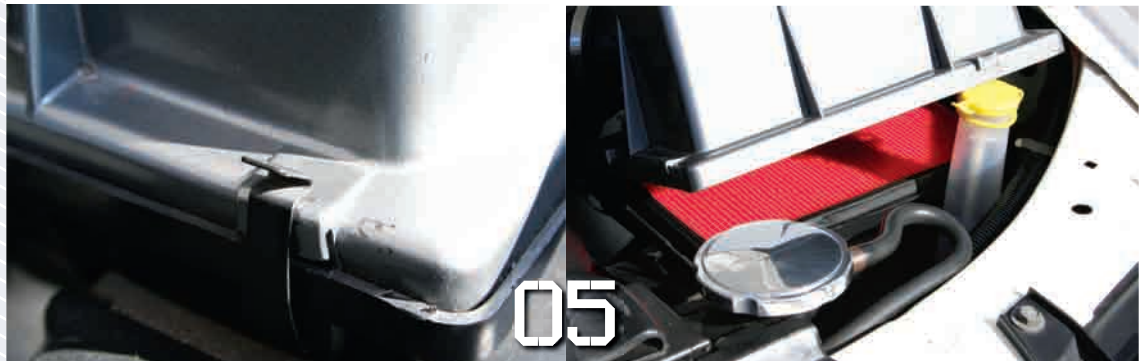
Locate your sump bolt and grab the correctly sized ring spanner or socket bit. Grab the oil tray and get it ready to catch the oil that will flow out of the hole. Loosen the bolt and remove it by hand. It's a good idea to have a rag handy to wipe the oil off your hands and clean up any spills



STEP 5

While the oil is draining, you now have time to start on the other areas of the job. It is a good idea to check the condition of your air filter at each service interval, even if you don't actually need to swap it for a fresh one as the environmental conditions of your local area can dramatically affect the life of the filter. Say, for instance, the difference between a very dusty rural area or city area.

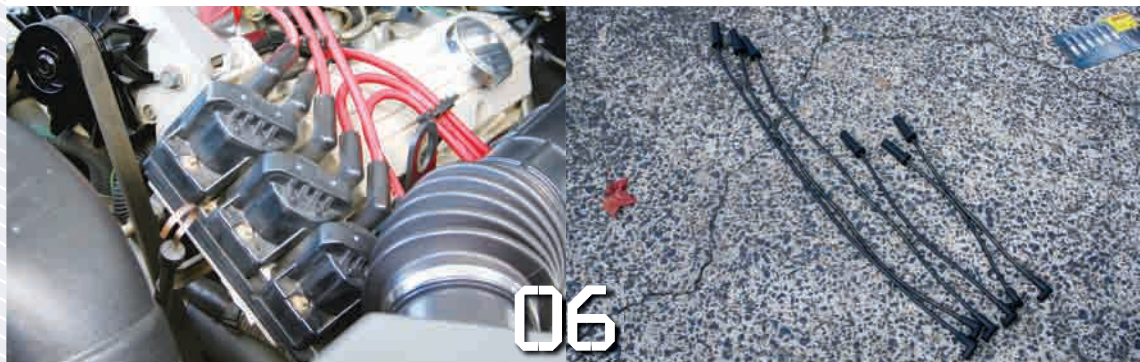
You can also buy reusable washable fabric units that usually have a higher initial price, but up to a million-kilometre lifespan. Just undo the little tabs as pictured and lift the top of the box. Each model will vary slightly, and if driving a carby-fed car, a single wingnut is usually all that secures the lid



STEP 6

For the uninitiated, this mass of cables can probably be a little daunting, especially if you've fiddled with them before and got them around the wrong way causing backfires and an irregular idle. Spark leads generally only require replacement every 30–40,000km or if a failure occurs. A misfire can often be attributed to a faulty spark lead, spark plug or coil failure.

I find it easiest if I replace them one by one, matching the sizes with the new ones so as to not require the use of my trusty Gregory's workshop manual and to avoid connecting them incorrectly



STEP 7

At the same time as swapping the spark leads, grab your new set of plugs and replace them a cylinder at a time. You'll require a ratchet handle and spark plug socket. I bought an additional uni-jointed attachment that allows greater freedom in motion in the cramped engine bay.

Don't use too much tension when screwing the new plugs in as you risk breaking the plug or threading the heads, especially in an alloy-headed engine like the Gen III where the alloy expands more



STEP 8

All your plugs should display very similar wear characteristics upon removal. Not too oily and not too burnt, but an even and light amount of wear. These plugs could probably have been cleaned and refitted, but for the minimal outlay for decent plugs, new ones are a better proposition.

Different driving conditions will also affect the colour and build-up on your plugs, with stop-start city driving giving you results like this. There are also different schools of thought as to properly sized plug gaps between the pin and electrode,



but for your average stock-to-mild NA motor, the way they come is normally fine. Your workshop manual will also have a recommendation on the subject

STEP 9

While you've been doing all this, your old oil has been draining quietly into the oil tray. You'll also want to change your oil filter for a fresh one to ensure it catches the most possible contaminants and offer the least amount of restriction to oil flow.

It's a good idea to 'prime' the filter by pouring some fresh oil into it before fitting it onto the engine and smear some of the oil onto the rubber gasket to promote a better seal. Of course, once you're at this stage you should have the sump bolt back in. With the plug in and the filter on, you can lower the car back down.

STEP 10

Grab yourself a plastic or steel funnel with which to cleanly pour the oil into your filler hole. The location of this will differ from engine to engine, but they are normally found on one of the rocker covers.

It's a good idea to clearly mark this as 'not for food' if the funnel is to be kept anywhere near the kitchen or children

STEP 11

Now start pouring the fresh oil into the engine, making sure to use the factory's recommended grade or the oil of your choice having made an informed decision on what will be best for your application.

Don't try to pour all 5L into the engine as most engines won't take that much and you will have all sorts of problems if you overfill the engine with oil

STEP 12

When you think it's getting close to being full, check the dipstick to see what level it is at, making sure to give it a little time to filter through the engine to the sump

STEP 13

Always dispose of the waste oil in an environmentally responsible fashion. Never tip it down the drain or pour it into the soil. Instead, pour it into an old oil container and take it to a waste oil collector. Many service stations collect waste oil, otherwise check the phone book or 'Google' it

CONCLUSION

Once you think you have everything connected again, remembering to put your oil cap back on (you won't believe how many times I've heard about people forgetting, only to get oil spray all over their engine bay. I've done it, too!), start the car and let it run for a while to get the fresh blood flowing and listen for any misfire that could be a result of a spark lead not connected properly or other issues.

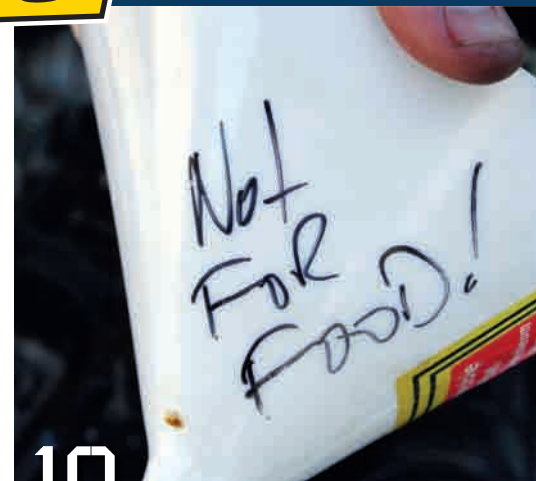
This is a task anyone can do in their garage or on their driveway, and besides saving you money, it'll also give you the satisfaction of knowing that you did it and a greater knowledge and understanding of your car.



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