

The Nutty Professor's Service Manual

Basic Servicing Part (1) – The Oil Change

Summer will soon be upon us and the start of the show season is just around the corner. So whether you tuck your VW away in a nice dry garage for winter months or drive it all year round, spring is a great time to give it a bit of a service. With the promise of slightly warmer days, it's a prime time to pull your finger out and ensure you have a summer of trouble free VW motoring. So chuck on as many layers of clothes as you can, until you look like the Michelin man and walk like you've shit yourself and grab your tools.

I must point out that this article is based on Kirsty's 1976 1300 air-cooled VW beetle, but most flat four motors are the same.

The Oil Change

Difficulty Rating: *Any muppet can do this!*

Approximate Cost: *Can of Oil = £14. Sump Gasket Set = £1.99*

Tools Needed: *10mm spanner or socket, 19mm spanner or socket, lots of rags for cleaning up.*

According to VW the oil in your air-cooled VW motor should be changed every 12 months or 3000 miles. When was the last time you changed yours?

Changing the engine oil in your beloved VW, is probably the simplest of all servicing tasks.

Firstly pop to your local branch of German, Swedish and French and purchase a sump gasket set, and some engine oil. I use Morris 15/40.

Take your V-Dub for a drive round the block. Just for a couple of minutes to warm the engine oil up. Don't go blasting up the motorway or thrashing the nuts off it for half hour and then immediately try to change the oil. Getting burned by red hot motor oil can really put a downer on your day!

Park your VW on a level surface. This is important for draining out the old oil and ensuring you put the right level of new oil back in. If your ride is lowered, you may need to lift up the rear with a jack to get access to the sump plate on the bottom of the engine (picture 1). Make sure you use axle stands to properly support your vehicle before getting under it!

Now comes the messy bit. Get a large pan (like you'd use to cook the Xmas turkey in, but don't let the other half see you stealing it) and place it directly under the sump plate below your engine. Get your 19mm spanner or socket and undo the large drain plug in the centre of the sump plate as seen in (picture 1). And allow the oil to drain out. Some older sump plates do not have a central drain plug. In this case begin to undo the nuts around the edges of the plate, until the oil begins to seep out of one side. Make sure your pan is catching the oil and you're not creating your own version of the Exxon Valdez oil disaster over your next door neighbours new brick block driveway! Remove the oil filler cap in the engine bay so the oil drains easier.



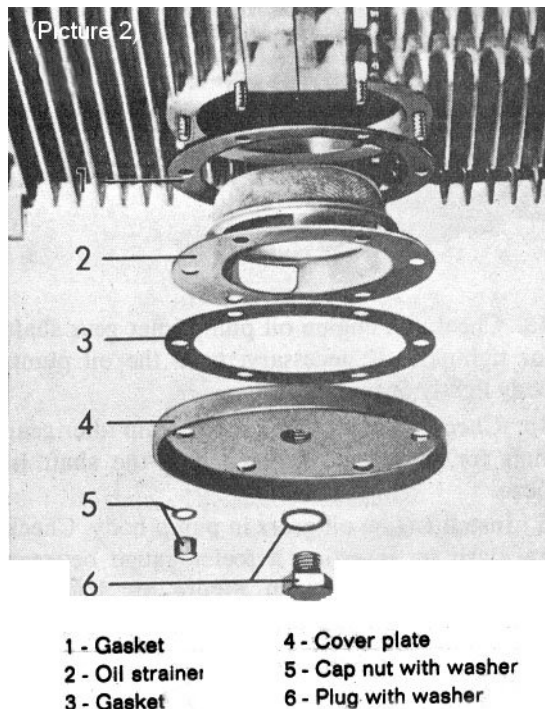
Now leave the oil to drain and go and put the kettle on! See nothing to this motor mechanic stuff....

Leave the engine to drain for about ten minutes to ensure you get 99% of the old oil out. When you return to your VW you'll probably find that your neighbour's cat has helpfully walked through your oil pan and right across your neighbour's new driveway. If you're lucky you may just catch site of the moggy as it disappears into your neighbour's cat

flap to curl up on their nice new cream carpets they were boasting about last week.

Now comes the messy bit. If you haven't already, undo all of the nuts around the sump plate and the sump plate should come off. Try not to drop the nuts or the sump plate into your pan of old oil, or you'll be going fishing around in the black stuff to retrieve them.

Just behind the sump plate is a cardboard gasket, which is usually falling apart like wet paper mache. Remove this cardboard gasket and bin it. You will then see a silver (although covered in oil) plate that needs to come off. This is the oil strainer and should come off the same as the sump plate, but has a mesh dome shaped strainer which is just inside the engine (picture 2).



This can be quite easy to bend so be careful not to be heavy handed with it, unless you have a new one to go in (only cost about £5).

Behind this (between it and the bottom of the engine) should be another cardboard gasket. Remove this and bin it. Now clean around the edge of the sump plate hole and ensure that all bits of the old caskets are gone. A bit of white spirit or petrol on a rag is good for this. I also find that the top of my head is good at attracting the oil.

Now clean the oil strainer with white spirit. Make sure you get all the gunk out and any bits of anything that may be stuck. It should be nice and shiny when clean. Do not put it back in the engine dirty or if at all bent out of shape. Buy a new one if needed. Clean the sump plate and all the nuts.

Now assuming your engine has stopped dripping old oil onto your now oil soaked driveway and you haven't been arrested for scaring the little old lady next door into thinking the creature from the black lagoon has come to take her away, due to there being more oil on you than in the Iraq desert. You should be able to use your new

gasket set to put the filter and sump plate back on the bottom of the engine (as per picture 2). Before putting the gaskets on, smear a little grease over them. This helps them to seal and holds them in place while you're dropping the new washers, (from the gasket set) down your sleeves while trying to tighten up the six nuts around the edge of the sump plate. You will then wish you hadn't put so many layers of clothes on, and the lady from across the street will call the police as she spies you doing a strip tease.

After you've explained to the police that you are not a sex pest and handcuffs don't actually turn you on, you can return to the task at hand.

Do not over tighten the nuts on the sump plate because the threads will strip very easily. Once you have the sump back on, it's time to fill up with new oil.

At this point two items are invaluable. The first is a measuring jug, and the second is a funnel. It's no secret that the location of the oil filler on the VW flat four is not exactly in the most convenient of locations and there is more chance of me getting Kylie Minogue in my bed, face down, barking like a dog than there is of actually pouring the oil straight from the oil can into the engine. Anyway, it is also worth stuffing a bit of rag around the engine just below the oil filler to catch any drips rather than coating the outside of your engine in more oil than the inside.

To fill your engine you will need approx 4 and a half pints (2.5 litres) of fresh engine oil. Put the first 4 pints, or two litres in and let it settle. Then add the further half a pint or half a litre a bit at a time, checking the dip stick level as you go to ensure you do not over fill your engine.

If you have put all of your allotted oil in your motor and your dipstick is still showing no level, take a quick look under the engine and make sure you've put the drain plug back in the centre of the sump plate. If you haven't, the symptom will present itself as a large 2.5 litre lake of engine oil on your drive. (Oh Shit.. Call Greenpeace in to save any local wildlife)..

Once you have filled up with new oil and have cleaned any excess drips from the engine bay, you can start your engine. HOWEVER... Start your engine but do not rev it. Wait for the oil pressure light to go out before pressing the loud pedal. Check around for any oil leaks (just in case).

Now clean up the masses of mess you have created and decant the old oil into a suitable container and take it to your local dump for disposal. Alternatively leave it in the corner of your father in laws shed where he'll just think it's some old roofing paint or something.

Happy VW motoring people. Roll on summer..!!!

Servicing VW Part (2) next month.

Regards,

Simon
(aka Nutty Professor)