

VACUUM OIL CHANGES

When changing the engine oil in my MGB I'd always been of the school of thought that believes in removing the drain plug with the oil hot and letting the engine drain for a long while, to get out as much old oil as possible. However, a friend recently suggested that I should try one of the vacuum oil extraction units which sucks the oil out through the dipstick tube. This inevitably might leave behind a little of the old oil in the bottom of the sump.

When considering this, I thought:

1. I change the oil in five cars each year (our three, and my daughters two). That is five lots of crawling around under cars trying to remove the sump drain plug and catch the oil in a tray without spilling oil on the drive. And I'm not getting any younger!
2. As the oil and filters in each car are changed each year, regardless of mileage, the small amount of oil remaining in the bottom of the sump will still be in pretty good condition and will be well diluted by the new oil.
3. I can't see how the oil cooler on the MGB is ever drained during a normal oil change anyway, so there is always going to be some old oil left in the system, and a lot more than the few drops left behind after the vacuum extraction technique.
4. I'm always worried that I've either forgotten to put the drain plug back in, or it isn't going to seal properly and I'll lose all my expensive new oil when I fill the engine.

I decided to try the vacuum technique and bought a Sealey kit (other types might be available!).



Vacuum oil extraction kit



Extractor with suction tube in place

The kit comes with two different diameter tubes to go down the dipstick tube. For the MGB I found I had to use the smaller of the two. It is recommended that the engine is run for a few minutes before starting, so that the oil is warm and any contaminants are mixed into the old oil. Then it is just a question of pumping the handle on the top of the container and waiting for the oil to be sucked out, which takes about 5 minutes. There was a satisfying gurgling noise at the end of the operation as the tube sucked up the dregs in the bottom of the sump.



Suction tube going into dipstick tube

Apart from the cleanliness of the operation, the system has the advantage that the container for the old oil is marked in litres, so it is easy to see how much old oil has been sucked out and therefore how much new oil needs to be added.

If I bought a second hand car that I was worried hadn't had regular oil changes I might still do the first oil change by the traditional method. Apart from that I'm sold on the idea of vacuum oil changes and look forward to no more crawling about scraping my knuckles!

Kevin Prosser
January 2018