

## Do Your Own Oil Change

If you're mechanically inclined and don't mind getting messy, changing your car's oil by yourself can save some extra cash over oil changes at your local service station. The first step is finding the correct supplies. You'll need a jack, a wrench or ratchet (make sure it's the right size!), a new oil filter, oil (check the grade), a short bucket, a rag, a funnel, and a big piece of cardboard.

Start by warming up your vehicle. Drive around the block once or twice to heat up your engine a little bit. The oil has to be warmed up first; otherwise, you'll have trouble getting it out of the engine. Find the strongest point on the bottom of your vehicle – usually your axle – to jack up the car. If you've never jacked up a car before, ask for help and follow all the recommended safety precautions. Now you're ready to get down and start the dirty work!

The first step is to drain out all the old oil. Using the Owner's Manual, look under your vehicle and locate the oil drain (usually one of the only plugs in view). Typically, this plug will be located close to the middle of the engine. Place the piece of cardboard under the vehicle, to protect your back and catch any oil that drips. Grab your bucket and place it just below the oil plug. Once the bucket is in place take your wrench or ratchet and unscrew the oil plug slowly, letting all the oil drain.

Be careful when draining the oil. Depending on how much you warmed up the car, the oil could be hot! Give the oil time to drain into the bucket and wait until it starts coming out in slow drops. Then, carefully unscrew the oil filter, being careful of any additional oil that might drip out with the filter. Make sure you catch all the oil in the bucket – oil leaked onto the pavement can easily enter the water system and cause contamination.

Once you've drained all the oil, replace the plug and add the new oil filter. Clean up any messes that were made with your cleaning rag. Now it's time to put in the new oil. Find out how many liters of oil your vehicle needs and what grade of oil is recommended for your vehicle and climate. You can get oil at any auto parts store or service station near you. Use your funnel to pour it through the spout labeled for oil on top of your engine. Use the dipstick to check and make sure the oil level is high enough. Once the tank is full put all caps back on and close the hood.

Don't ever, EVER dump oil down the drain or into the sewer system. Oil contamination can wreak havoc on water sanitation facilities and can be especially harmful to any wildlife that comes in contact with it. If you don't know what the disposal rules are for your area, call a local oil change service to find out.

## About the Author

Sarah Russell, aka "The Sexy Secretary," is a connoisseur of living the good life on a budget. Check out her website at [www.thesexysecretary.com](http://www.thesexysecretary.com) for more fabulous ideas on how to trim down your expenses without reducing your quality of life.

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