

# Outlook on Lifestyle

## How to jump-start your car

By Peter Bohr  
Contributing Editor, Road & Track

A true story: The would-be hero of this tale comes out of a restaurant and finds two forlorn fellows trying in vain to start a car with a nearly dead battery. So he volunteers to help jump-start the car with cables he carries in his own car's trunk.

The connections are made, the car comes to life and as he removes the cables, the dead battery suddenly blows its top, spraying him with battery acid. To add insult to our hero's injuries, the two fellows jump out of the car and flee the scene like scoundrels. Which indeed they were, for the car turned out to be stolen.

The moral of the story is not that one should be afraid to do a good deed. It's simply that a car's battery — that innocent-looking lump of plastic sitting in the engine compartment — requires a little respect.

### Weather Facts & Fancies



### Did You Know?

(NC)—A blizzard brought 20 cm of snow to Iqaluit (Frobisher Bay) on the 14th and 15th of February. Winds gusting to over 100 km/h had caused enormous drifting by the 16th. "I knew I was in trouble," one resident said, "when I saw my neighbour walk past my second-storey window."

- On August 27, 1973, a hailstone weighing 290 g and measuring 114 mm across fell at Cedoux, Sask. Its mass on impact was estimated at 450 g - the largest hailstone ever documented in Canada.
- On November 17, 1987, in sub-zero temperatures and with winds gusting to 50 km/h, former Olympians Barbara Ann Scott-King and Fred Hayward started the Olympic torch on its 87-day, 18,000 km journey from St. John's to Calgary for the 1988 winter Olympics. Some 6820 Canadians eventually participated in the torch relay.
- On October 13, 1987, beachcombers and bathers were startled to find hundreds of TV sets washing up on the beaches of southern Florida's Atlantic coast. The sets had been in 17 cargo containers washed from the decks of a freighter the day before by Hurricane Floyd.
- The warmest temperature ever recorded in the United States, 56.7°, was set in Death Valley, California, July 10, 1913, at a place with the ironic name of Greenland Ranch. This is also a record high for the Western Hemisphere.

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### KEEPING YOUR CAR ALIVE



PETER BOHR

Inside a battery there are lead plates surrounded by a mixture of water and sulfuric acid. When the car's alternator charges the battery, bubbles of hydrogen rise through liquid. As anyone who has heard of the "Hindenburg" knows, hydrogen is a pretty explosive stuff.

If all is well with the battery and the car's charging system, what little hydrogen that is formed vents harmlessly into the air. But if all is not well (often the case with a dead old battery) it can build up inside the battery, turning it into a miniature hydrogen bomb of sorts.

And there are plenty of ways you

can ignite the hydrogen when jump-starting a car. Dangling a lighted cigarette over the battery is certainly one way. But more likely is a spark caused by mishandling the jumper cables.

The worst thing you can do is connect the ends of the cables to the good battery and then carelessly touch the other ends of the cables together — that's guaranteed to cause a show of fireworks.

You'll also see major sparking if you mistakenly cross up the negative and positive terminals of the batteries.

So when you jump-start a car, it's a healthy idea to follow the right procedure in order to avoid sparks.

Bring the two cars together (but not touching) so the cables will easily reach the batteries. If the cables are stretched too tight, a clamp could pop off, touch metal and cause a spark. Turn off the ignition and any electrical accessories on BOTH cars.

Next, identify the terminals; they're usually marked on the battery

with plus and minus signs or the letters POS and NEG. On some batteries, the positive terminal is the fatter

find an unpainted, ungreasy spot on the engine that will provide a good connection.

of the two. Securely clamp the positive terminals of both batteries with the ends of one cable. Then, with one end of the second cable lying on dry pavement away from metal, clamp the other end to the negative terminal of the good battery.

The safest procedure calls for clamping the last cable end to the engine block or chassis of the car with the dead battery — but not to the negative terminal of the dead battery.

Sometimes there's a small spark when the final contact is made between the two batteries; so by attaching the cable to the engine, it keeps the spark away from the battery. It also has the advantage of bypassing the ground cable of the bad battery. Corroded ground cables are often the cause of hard starting and dead batteries in the first place.

But yes, I know that's easier said than done. In the real world, it's probably night and raining, and it's hard to

So most people — including four out of four professional mechanics I asked — routinely attach the cable to the negative terminal of the bad battery. Still, it's probably safest to find a spot on the engine or chassis if possible.

When the connections are made, start the engine of the car with the bad battery. Keep it running, but only at an idle until the jumper cables are removed. Remove the cables in the opposite order from which they were attached. Again, be very careful not to touch the cable ends to each other or to metal on the cars.

Considering how frequently people jump-start cars, and often with cavalier disregard for connecting the cables in the proper order, battery blow-ups are actually very rare. But when fiddling with car batteries, it's wise to keep your guard up, your sleeves down, and your gloves and glasses on, just in case.

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### ASK KATHY

#### SHOPPING DAZE

**Q:** Grocery shopping is disastrous to my diet. Everything looks so good in the store, and I usually end up buying sweets or chips that I didn't intend to buy. How can I shop more effectively?

**A:** Wise shopping is vital to effective dieting. As dieters soon learn, dieting does not begin at the dinner table. So plan ahead. Write down the week's menu. Make a shopping list, then follow it. Include a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables for healthful snacking.

Eat before shopping to cut down on impulsive buying. It will also help if you know the layout of the store. This will reduce shopping time, and also enable you to more easily avoid the foods that are tempting to you. Remember, the most nutritious foods, such as fresh produce, dairy



KATHY HAJAS  
Diet Center Counselor

products and meats, are usually arranged on the outside aisles.

If you would like more information on wise shopping tips, contact your local Diet Center at 877-2900. Shopping will become diet supportive instead of diet disastrous.

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