

Motor Oil & Other Product FAQ

Whether you have questions pertaining to motor oil performance, synthetic oils or how to recycle your used oil, you can get the answers you're looking for below. First, narrow the options down by choosing the closest-related category to your question.

General Motor Oil FAQ

Does motor oil expire? If not, how long does motor oil generally last?

Valvoline motor oils do not have documented expiration dates. When stored under optimal conditions, the product remains stable for an extended period of time. It can be used as long as the American Petroleum Institute (API) rating on the label continues to meet or exceed the requirements listed in your car's owner's manual. If the rating is still current, we advise you shake the container before use to blend any additives that may have settled.

Does motor oil ever wear out or does it just get dirty?

Yes, motor oil does break down. Oil additives are consumed and combustion byproducts build up in the oil. Changing your motor oil on a consistent basis removes combustion byproducts and replenishes the additives.

Does my vehicle's oil filter need to be changed with every oil change?

Valvoline recommends you replace the oil filter with every oil change, as this will eliminate any risk of contaminants trapped in the oil filter (e.g., dirt) from re-entering the new oil. Always be sure to follow the oil change frequency recommendations in your vehicle's owner's manual and to use an oil filter meeting automotive manufacturers' guidelines: e.g., USCAR.

Is the bulk oil that is put in my vehicle during an oil change at a Valvoline Instant Oil Change location different from bottled oil at an auto parts store?

No, they are the same. The bulk product put in your vehicle at a [Valvoline Instant Oil Change location](#) is the same product formulation Valvoline packages in other size containers.

Are conventional motor oils natural, unprocessed products?

The base oils used in [conventional motor oils](#) do come from petroleum, but they have gone through extensive refining processes. These base oils are compounded with various additives, which provide important properties such as antiwear, friction reduction and long life.

Which Valvoline motor oils meet GM standard dexos 1™ Gen 2 standard?

The following Valvoline motor oils meet or exceed the requirements of GM standard dexos 1™ Gen 2:

- [SynPower 0W-20, 5W-20, 5W-30](#)
- [Durablend 5W-20, 5W-30](#)
- [Full Synthetic High Mileage with MaxLife Technology 0W-20, 5W-20, 5W-30](#)

Why do some motor oils carry the "API Certified - For Gasoline Engines" starburst symbol on the bottle while others do not?

The starburst symbol means that the oil meets the requirements of the International Lubricants Specification Advisory Committee (ILSAC) in addition to the requirements of API, as stated in the API



starburst symbol on the back of the bottle. Only certain viscosity grades are eligible for the starburst symbol.

Which Valvoline motor oils help to conserve energy?

All Valvoline motor oils with the starburst symbol help to reduce fuel consumption.

How do I properly dispose of my used motor oil?

Usually, you can recycle your used motor oil at any auto parts store. Ensure you store your used motor oil in a tightly sealed bottle or container.

Valvoline Instant Oil ChangeSM locations cannot accept your used motor oil.

Performance FAQ

Can motor oil significantly improve horsepower?

Yes. Motor oil formulas with friction modifiers and additives help to improve horsepower. Lower viscosity (lighter) oils can improve horsepower providing that they separate moving parts and maintain engine durability. The optimum oil viscosity for a given engine is specified by the automotive manufacturer.

When motor oil is better for “severe” conditions, what are "severe" conditions?

Severe conditions include stop-and-go driving, consistent idling, pulling, towing, dusty environment or high or low ambient temperatures.

If I don't drive in severe conditions can I change my oil less often?

Your owner's manual may provide different oil change intervals for both regular driving and severe driving.

Is it a good idea to let your car warm up (idle)?

Most modern cars don't require idling time before driving.

Can I improve motor oil performance in my vehicle by using aftermarket additives?

Generally no. Most vehicle manufacturers do not endorse using aftermarket additives. Certain additives may temporarily improve performance of older engines. (We recommend you check with the vehicle manufacturer before using any aftermarket additive.)

Are all additives the same?

No. Additives contain different formulations that affect certain parts of the engine differently than other additives.

Oil Types, Weights & Viscosity FAQ

Is it ok to switch motor oil weights, for example, from a 5W-20 to a 10W-30?

It depends. Some vehicle manufacturers provide a range of recommended motor oil viscosity grades based on the outside temperature in which the car is driven. Other manufacturers recommend the use of only one motor oil viscosity grade. For best engine performance, always follow the manufacturer's recommendations found in your vehicle's owner's manual.

Is it ok to use 5W-30 in a car if the owner's manual calls for 5W-20?

Valvoline does not recommend doing this. Using a heavier grade than recommended may cause decrease in fuel economy, higher engine loads and eventually shortened engine life. Using a lighter grade than recommended may result in excessive mechanical wear and reduced engine life. For maximum engine performance, follow the recommended motor oil viscosity and maintenance schedule provided in your vehicle's owner's manual.

What does the "w" in a grade of motor oil stand for?

The "w" in motor oil stands for winter. The first number in the oil classification refers to a cold weather viscosity. The lower this number is, the less viscous your oil will be at low temperatures. For example, a 5W- motor oil will flow better at lower temperatures than a 15W- motor oil. The higher number, following the "w" refers to hot weather viscosity, or how fluid your oil is at hot temperatures. The higher the number, the thicker the oil at a specified temperature.

Is thicker oil better?

In some circumstances, thicker oil can be used to compensate for increased bearing clearances (gaps between bearing and rotating shaft) that have developed over the years. A large change in bearing clearances can result in poorer lubrication. For best performance always follow the recommendations for motor oil viscosity in your vehicle's owner's manual.

When does it make sense to use straight weight oil (SAE30) versus a multigrade oil (5W-30)?

Straight weight oil is never recommended for use in a system that requires a multi-viscosity oil. Straight weight oils are generally recommended for smaller engines or older vehicles that were made before multi-viscosity oils were produced.

Is switching types of motor oil (conventional, synthetic, etc.) harmful to my vehicle's engine?

Conventional, synthetic blend, synthetic and high mileage motor oils are compatible and will not harm your vehicle's engine. For maximum engine performance, follow the motor oil type recommendation provided in your vehicle's owner's manual.

Is it true that older cars must only use conventional oil?

No.

Do I have to wait until my car reaches 75,000 miles before I can use MaxLife?

Valvoline [MaxLife motor oil](#) is designed for high mileage vehicles of 75,000 miles or more. However, it is perfectly acceptable to use the high mileage motor oil in new or used vehicles with less than 75,000 miles.

Has MaxLife always been a synthetic blend motor oil?

[MaxLife Synthetic Blend motor oil](#) is actually the same product as regular MaxLife. MaxLife has always been a synthetic blend oil; we just now label the product that way. As long as you have used MaxLife, you have used synthetic blended oil.

How do Valvoline full synthetic motor oils compare to Mobil 1 and Amsoil?

Valvoline's full synthetic motor oils meet and exceed the same specifications as these two products.

Valvoline full synthetic motor oils are high performing, high-quality oils formulated with full synthetic base oils and top tier additives to provide an increased level of performance. All of

Valvoline's full synthetic motor oils are API licensed to ensure quality for North American vehicle application. We have specially designed [Valvoline SynPower 5w40](#) for application in high performance European or diesel passenger cars and this oil carries the specific OEM approvals such as Mercedes Benz, Volkswagen, Porsche and BMW. Our North American SynPower 5w20, 5w30 and 10w30 exceed ILSAC GF-5 requirements and carry the API starburst on the front label. Valvoline full synthetic motor oils are designed with extra levels of detergent and antioxidant to provide outstanding deposit and heat protection.

Recycled Motor Oil FAQ

Is recycled motor oil better for the environment than non-recycled motor oil?

Yes. By recycling motor oil, we're hoping to help prevent used oil from being disposed of improperly and contaminating the soil and water. Recycled motor oil also uses 56% fewer resources compared to oil made without recycled content.

Is Valvoline NextGen™ recycled motor oil just dirty oil that has been cleaned?

No. NextGen™ uses a refining process similar to crude oil refining. The multi-stage refining process removes contaminants and additives to create fresh oil that performs just as good as new. Then special additives are blended to create a recycled motor oil formula with superior performance and protection characteristics compared to specifications. Valvoline has a rigorous quality control process to assure that NextGen meets our highest quality standards.

Is recycling my used motor oil better for the environment?

Yes. Recycling your motor oil prevents used oil from being disposed of improperly and potentially contaminating the soil and water.

Will using recycled motor oil void my manufacturer's warranty?

No. All major car manufacturers have approved the use of recycled motor oil formulas properly certified by the American Petroleum Institute (API). Valvoline NextGen™ recycled motor oil carries and exceeds all API certifications.

Racing Oil FAQ

What are the benefits of using racing oil versus regular passenger car oil?

The Valvoline VR1 Racing and other [racing oils](#) not intended for passenger vehicles contain additional additives for increased horsepower and reduced friction on metal parts, provide extra wear protection for high compression/higher horsepower engines, and include fewer detergents than regular conventional motor oils.

What is motor oil with zinc?

The anti-wear additive simply referred to as zinc by most car enthusiasts is actually short for Zinc Dialkyl Dithiophosphates or ZDDP. Its primary role is to prevent metal-to-metal contact between engine parts by forming a protective film. Despite being referred to as zinc, ZDDP also contains phosphorus, which helps to perform the anti-wear function in the motor oil.

Why are zinc/phosphorus levels in motor oil lower in today's motor oils?

With ever increasing limits on emissions, automobile manufacturers have tightened emission control systems on newer vehicles. This is one of several factors considered when the American Petroleum Institute (API) sets standards for motor oil with zinc. The current API standard is SN, which replaced

the previous SM classification. Because phosphorus can poison a vehicle's emission system, the level of zinc is lower for current motor oil. Valvoline uses a new type of zinc/phosphorus that maintains the prior level of wear protection of the engine while reducing the impact on the emission system.

What is the controversy surrounding the amount of zinc in motor oil?

The controversy exists as a result of many hands-on car enthusiasts and engine experts believe that lower levels of zinc in API SN and SM motor oils can cause excessive wear in older style push-rod and flat-tappet engines. They hold this belief despite the fact that all new motor oil classifications are intended to be backward compatible.

What solutions does Valvoline offer to the zinc issue?

Valvoline offers two solutions to the zinc issue:

- *Valvoline VR1 Racing Oil*: Contains 75% higher zinc than SN or SM motor oil with a balanced additive package designed to work in both racing and traditional applications. Valvoline provides this product in both multi and mono viscosity grades: 20w50, straight 50, 10w30, straight 30, straight 40 and straight 60.
- *Longer-Lasting Zinc/Phosphorus*: Valvoline uses an advanced zinc/phosphorus additive that keeps higher levels of phosphorus in the motor oil where it protects the engine instead of poisoning the catalytic converter.

Which oil has more zinc/ZDDP: VR1 or Not Street Legal racing oil?

Valvoline VR1 Racing Oil contains .13 percent zinc and .12 percent phosphorus compared to the Valvoline "Not Street Legal" Racing Oil, which contains .14 percent zinc and .13 percent phosphorus.

Will an additive boost the zinc level?

Keep in mind that zinc additives are corrosive above certain levels and can harm your engine. Valvoline doesn't recommend using third-party additives to boost the zinc level. If higher zinc levels are required for your engine, we recommend using Valvoline VR-1, and always remember to consult your vehicle's owner's manual.

Is VR1 conventional oil synthetic or a blend?

[Valvoline VR1 racing oil](#) is conventional, non-synthetic racing oil.

[Specialty Oil FAQ](#)

[ATV Oil FAQ](#)

Does Valvoline ATV oil meet SG, SH, SJ API service classifications?

[Valvoline ATV 4-Stroke SAE 10W-40 motor oil](#) meets these specs as well as the JASO MA specification for wet-clutch applications.

Is Valvoline ATV oil a synthetic?

[Valvoline 4-Stroke ATV motor oil](#) is not a synthetic. Valvoline does not offer a synthetic oil for ATVs.

[Motorcycle Oil FAQ](#)

I ride a Harley-Davidson® and was told only to use their motorcycle oil. Is it OK to use Valvoline motorcycle oil?

It is completely fine to use [Valvoline's 4-Stroke Motorcycle Oil](#) in Harley-Davidson motorcycles. This oil is designed to meet the needs of all major brands of 4-stroke motorcycles and has been specifically tested in Harley-Davidson at our Ashland, KY testing facility.

[System Fluids FAQ](#)

[Power Steering Fluid FAQ](#)

What is the shelf life of the remaining Valvoline power steering fluid after it has been opened?

Any chemical that has been opened, including brake fluid, power steering fluid, etc., has a recommended shelf life of no longer than two to three years, depending on storage.

[Automatic Transmission Fluid FAQ](#)

I had my vehicle's transmission fluid changed using [Valvoline MaxLife™ ATF Fully Synthetic](#). Conventional transmission fluid was used for all previous changes. Will this cause a problem?

No. Switching to synthetic transmission fluid after using a conventional product will not cause a problem. Synthetic and conventional oils are 100 percent compatible.

What is the difference between DEXRON® III/MERCON® and type F transmission fluid?

The Valvoline Type F [transmission fluid](#) is a high quality NON-friction modified fluid. DEXRON® III/MERCON includes friction modifiers in the fluid additive package.

Does Valvoline make a synthetic ATF?

Yes. Valvoline makes several synthetic ATFs. [MaxLife® ATF](#), [Valvoline ATF for MERCON® V* applications](#), [ATF +4](#) and [DEXRON® VI](#) are all synthetic transmission fluids.

The Valvoline Company does not have a documented shelf life exposure on finished motor oil or automatic transmission fluid. We would expect under optimal conditions (in an enclosed space, protected from the weather) that the product would be stable for an extended period of time. We recommend two things: 1) Make sure the rating meets or exceeds your requirements, and 2) Shake the container before use. If the fluid sits for an extended period of time, sometimes the additives may settle in the bottom of the container.

Is it OK to mix synthetic ATF with a conventional and/or synthetic blend ATF?

Yes. Synthetic ATF and conventional fluids are 100 percent compatible with each other.

Is MaxLife ATF compatible with other brands of automatic transmission fluid?

MaxLife ATF is a multi-vehicle transmission fluid that is compatible with many brands and manufacturer recommendations. Refer to the [MaxLife product data sheet](#) to determine whether MaxLife is compatible for your vehicle's application.

Is MaxLife automatic transmission fluid an SP-III fluid?

[MaxLife ATF](#) is 100 percent compatible for use in SP-II and SP-III applications.

Can MaxLife ATF be used in Volvos with a Geartronic Transmission?

Valvoline [MaxLife ATF](#) is suitable for use in Volvo transmissions that require the use of TIV or JWS3309 ATF.

Can MaxLife ATF be used where a Dexron VI fluid is required?

Yes. [MaxLife ATF](#) can be used in DEXRON VI applications.

Can MaxLife ATF be mixed with Dexron VI or does the fluid need to be purged prior to installing MaxLife ATF?

Valvoline [MaxLife ATF transmission fluid](#) is 100 percent compatible with the DEXRON VI for mixing or flushing a system.

Is MaxLife ATF OK to use in applications requiring Mercon-V fluid?

Yes. [MaxLife ATF can be used where a MERCON V*](#) fluid is recommended.

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[Antifreeze FAQ](#)

Does the color of antifreeze matter? Can you mix antifreeze with different colored antifreeze products?

Color is used by many [antifreeze](#) and vehicle manufacturers for identification purposes. Color has no bearing on the performance of the antifreeze. Always follow the specifications in your owner's manual for coolant applications.

Can you mix DEX-COOL™ with other antifreeze products?

Improper mixing of coolants has the potential to cause corrosion issues. Valvoline recommends using the correct antifreeze/coolant for your particular application.

Additional Motor Oil Resources

There are quite a few myths pertaining to motor oil, recycled oils and synthetic oils. In order to help set things straight, we've addressed and debunked a lot of the common Motor Oil Myths below.

[General Motor Oil Myths](#)

MYTH: Changing your vehicle's motor oil yourself or using a certain brand voids your manufacturer's warranty.

Changing your vehicle's motor oil yourself or using a different brand of oil from your manufacturer's factory fill will not void the warranty. As long as the motor oil being used meets the manufacturer's standards required for the vehicle (e.g., viscosity grade, type), as provided in the owner's manual the warranty cannot be considered void.

MYTH: All oil additives are the same.

Not true. Some additives contain different formulations to affect certain parts of the engine differently than other additives.

MYTH: All brands of motor oil basically are the same.

That's false. Base oils, additives, etc., can be different from one brand to the next.

MYTH: Switching motor oil brands is harmful to my engine.

No. Switching brands is not harmful to your engine as long as you choose an oil marked with the API donut of the same level, e.g., API SN. Motor oil manufacturers must meet minimum industry standards for performance and compatibility of the API mark. However, make sure you follow the

recommendations provided in your owner's manual for viscosity and API category. You may give up enhanced performance if you switch from synthetic or high mileage to conventional oil.

MYTH: When motor oil becomes dark, that means it's time to change it.

This is not true. You cannot determine the life of [motor oil](#) by looking at its appearance since it may change color for several reasons. To ensure the best quality product, the best oil change tip is to always follow your vehicle's owner's manual guidelines for oil change intervals.

MYTH: You don't have to change your oil filter every time you change your oil.

Valvoline recommends changing your oil filter each and every time you change your oil. This eliminates any risk of contaminants trapped by the oil filter, such as dirt, from re-entering the oil. Consult your vehicle's owner's manual for your manufacturer's recommendation.

MYTH: Bulk oil is a different (lower) quality than bottled motor oil.

Valvoline's bulk oil is the exact same oil that is bottled and sold at retail locations.

MYTH: Oil never wears out – it only gets dirty.

False. Oil additives weaken as the engine oil is used.

MYTH: Thicker oil is better.

Thicker motor oil can be better for older engines in which engine parts have worn down over the years. However, it is recommended to always stick with the viscosity weight recommended by the manufacturer of the particular engine. The oil "thickness" (viscosity-temperature profile) is selected by the manufacturer to protect moving parts with specific design and surface roughness from excessive contact.

MYTH: The "w" stands for weight.

Actually, the "w" stands for winter, and the numbers that appear refer to the oil's viscosity at both low and high temperatures.

MYTH: Long driving = hard driving

This is not always the case. Hard driving pertains to high and/or consistent changes of RPMs (stop-and-go driving), pulling or towing. It can also be dependent upon the geographic area where you drive.

MYTH: You cannot use motor oil in a car with manual transmission.

This depends. It's important to follow your owner's manual for requirements and correct fluids to use in your manual transmission.

Recycled Oil Myths

MYTH: Recycled motor oil is not as good of a quality as new motor oil.

In the past, this may have been true. The new recycling techniques yield high-quality base oil that can match crude oil. Valvoline NextGen™ uses some of the highest quality recycled oil and a breakthrough formula for performance, which meets or exceeds industry specifications.

MYTH: Recycled oil needs to be changed more frequently.

Valvoline's NextGen™ has the same performance and protection qualities as regular motor oils. Users should always follow their recommended oil change intervals in their vehicle's owner's manual, just like any other oil.

MYTH: Using recycled motor oil will void your manufacturer's warranty.

All major car manufacturers have approved the use of recycled motor oil that is properly certified by the American Petroleum Institute (API). Valvoline's NextGen™ recycled motor oil carries and meets or exceeds all API certifications.

MYTH: You can't mix recycled oil with regular oil.

This is not true. Valvoline's NextGen™ characteristics are the same as new oil, which makes it fully compatible and safe to mix with regular motor oils.

MYTH: Once you've used regular motor oil you can't switch to recycled motor oil.

It is safe to switch from regular oil to recycled oil and back. Valvoline's NextGen™ also offers an engine protection guarantee.

Synthetic Motor Oil Myths

MYTH: Synthetic motor oil is "fake" oil.

Synthetic motor oils are not fake. They are derived from crude oil, natural gas, or other chemical feed materials; however, as a general rule they use more extensively processed, higher quality base oils than conventional motor oils. Synthetic oils also use different additives than conventional oils that are designed for extra wear protection and higher stability to temperature and shear.

MYTH: Synthetic motor oil is bad for engine seals.

Synthetic motor oil will not cause any damage to engine seals.

MYTH: Synthetic oil causes cars to use more oil.

False. Synthetic oils will not cause an engine to use more oil.

MYTH: Synthetic oil creates more sludge.

Not true. Valvoline synthetics include extra detergents to help clean an engine and reduce the risk of sludge.

MYTH: Synthetic oils are too thin and can create blow-by and oil burn-off in older cars.

Synthetic motor oils do not affect seals and will not be the cause of blow-by or oil burn-off in an older engine. Just like conventional motor oil, synthetic oils have a specific viscosity grade. However, our synthetic motor oil contains extra lubrication additives to make the oil stronger and provide higher heat dissipation.

MYTH: Once you've used synthetic motor oil you can't switch to conventional motor oil.

Not true. Synthetic and conventional oils are compatible, so it is not harmful if you decide to switch.

Other Related FAQ

Whether you have questions pertaining to motor oil performance, synthetic oils or how to recycle your used oil, you can get the answers you're looking for below. First, narrow the options down by choosing the closest-related category to your question.

Racing Sponsorships FAQ

How long has Valvoline been involved in racing?

Valvoline lubricated the winning car in the first auto race in the U.S. in 1895 in Chicago. Since then, [Valvoline Racing](#) has been involved all over the world in everything from NASCAR to Indy Car racing to NHRA drag racing to Formula One.

What teams does Valvoline sponsor?

In 2015, Valvoline has working relationships with a number of top tier teams and drivers in various series throughout the United States, including NASCAR and the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA). In NASCAR, Valvoline is proud to be the Official Motor Oil of Hendrick Motorsports. Valvoline also supports NHRA teams of Gray Motorsports and Stringer Performance.

When did Valvoline start making motor oil specifically for racing?

Racers have been depending on [Valvoline racing oils](#) for more than 100 years. Valvoline formulated the first racing motor oil in 1965 and Valvoline VR-1 Racing Motor Oil is the best-selling motor oil of all time. It can also be used for today's cars.

What Valvoline racing oils (racing-only) are available?

Valvoline has a complete line of [Pro-V Racing Oils](#) that are intended for racing engines only and are not suitable for street vehicles.

Our Business FAQ

When was Valvoline Founded?

Valvoline was founded by Dr. John Ellis who formulated a petroleum-based lubricant in 1866 and trademarked the Valvoline name in 1873.

How large a company is Valvoline?

Best known for its lubricants, Valvoline also markets a number of other brands, including Zerex™ [antifreeze](#) and MaxLife™ products created for higher-mileage engines. Valvoline also has a stake in the quick-lube market with its Valvoline Instant Oil ChangeSM unit, the second largest quick lube chain in the U.S. with some 930 service centers.