YOUR HEADLIGHTS

Keep Them Working Perfectly

Having a headlight out can be very dangerous.

No light bulb lasts forever. The typical bulb in your vehicle, whether it's a brake light, headlight or directional signal works basically the same as an incandescent bulb in your home. Electricity passing through the filament heats it up and causes the filament to glow, producing light. Unfortunately, the heat also causes the filament to fail with time and the bulb burns out.

Replacing A Headlight

When a headlight burns out, replace it immediately. You can end up with a fine, since state laws require that both your headlights be working.

If yours is a late-model vehicle, it should have one of these types of headlight:

- Conventional sealed-beam unit (sealed lens and bulb).
- Halogen sealed-beam unit.
- Composite (flush fitting) headlight that allows you to put in a small lamp instead of replacing the entire lens-and-bulb unit.

Before replacing any of these headlights, disconnect your battery's negative cable to prevent a short circuit.

Sealed Beam Models

To replace a sealed-beam headlight, first remove the trim covering the light's mounting screws. Then remove the three or four mounting screws. Take care not to loosen the two aiming screws when removing the mounting screws. Free any corroded screws with penetrating solvent.

While holding the light, remove the trim ring surrounding the beam. Plug the wire connector into the new sealed beam. Refit the trim ring. Make sure the beam works and is right side up. Otherwise it won't fit. Replace screws and trim.

Other Types Of Headlights

Always handle a halogen lamp by its plastic base, never by the glass. Oil from your hands will create hot spots on the glass and cause early failure.

Composite headlights are renewed simply by replacing the bulb in back of the lens housing. Be careful to avoid getting dirt in the lens housing.

If you replace a bulb correctly, your headlight aim should be undisturbed. Proper aim lets you see the road without distracting oncoming traffic. If oncoming drivers flash their high beams at you, have your aim checked.

The only way to aim your headlights accurately is to have a service station or dealer do it with a professional aiming device. This measures both the vertical and horizontal planes. Low cost do-it-yourself aimers are available, but these adjust headlights only on the vertical plane and the instructions must be followed closely.

Dim Your Lights

Be courteous to oncoming drivers, just as you want them to be courteous to you. Dim your lights whenever there is oncoming traffic. Keep them down until traffic clears. Then return to your high beams. You need the extra illumination.

Coping With Brights

We've all had at least one run-in with someone who refuses to click off the high beams when approaching your vehicle. What's the best way to handle the situation?

- Switch your lights to low beam.
- Reduce your speed.
- Use the right edge of the pavement as a guide until the vehicle has passed. This will give your eyes some relief from the glare.

Your Lights Are Important

Take good care of your vehicle's headlights, keep them clean and make sure they are there to serve you when it's dark. You need all the help you can get to see where you're going after the sun goes down.