

How to recharge a battery

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Rechargeable batteries, the most common being NiMH (Nickel Metal Hydride), NiCd (Nickel Cadmium), Li-ion (Lithium-ion) and Lead Acid (the type most commonly found in vehicles), are a sustainable alternative to standard, disposable batteries. You can learn to use a battery charger to recharge smaller batteries for consumer electronics and other appliances, as well as the battery in your car.

Whether you accidentally left a light on overnight or you're trying to resurrect the fixer upper in your garage, you may need to bring a car battery back to life. In order to charge a dead car battery, a set of jumper cables and a functional car with a charged battery are required. However, you may need a float charger to run a trickle recharge if the battery is especially old or hasn't been used in a while. We spoke with professional automotive mechanic Duston Maynes to help break all of this down for you.

Little signals the start of a frustrating day like trying to start your car and getting, at best, the slow and ineffectual churn of the starter motor that signals a dying battery. Most drivers have probably experienced it at some point, and while it can be frustrating, it can also be quite easy to fix - especially if you have a car battery charger to hand.

Whether you need a new battery, the car just needs a helping hand to start in cold weather, or if you inadvertently left the lights on for a few hours, a battery charger can get you back on the road again. Some models can even help revive a battery that's on its last legs, letting you drive around for a little longer before having to buy a brand new battery.

While your car's manual might seem a little impenetrable, it's the best place to start before charging your battery, as there may be useful information in there not just on charging, but information specific to your car - for instance, some battery chargers may not be compatible with all cars so you may need a specific type, while other cars may require a particular procedure. If you don't have the manual, you may be able to find it online, or contact your local dealer for advice.

The charger will also have a user manual which will indicate the correct way to use it. If you're happy you know what you're doing, you can get started. Wearing appropriate safety gear is a sensible precaution. Gloves and safety glasses will prevent you getting injured by sparks or battery acid.

Note that cars with a stop/start system have a different type of battery, either an AGM or EFB battery. These

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are only compatible with smart battery chargers that recondition the battery as they charge it.

Step 1: Locate your car's battery In most cars the battery will be located under the bonnet in the engine bay, which you'll need to open using a handle in the cabin, typically somewhere under the dashboard. In some cars though - for instance, in most BMWs it's located behind a side panel in the boot. Even if the battery is under the bonnet, access can be tricky. In some cars it's in a box, in others pieces of plastic trim need to be removed to reach it. If you're not confident about disassembling the car yourself, leave the job to a garage or breakdown service.

Disconnect the negative lead (usually the black one, but both positive and negative terminals should be clearly marked on the battery or battery connectors itself) first, undoing the bolts holding the clamp until it lifts off the terminal. Repeat the process for the positive (red) lead. It can be quite a fiddly job that's made easier with a decent torque wrench.

With the battery clamps removed, you can assess their condition and that of the terminals. If they're rusty and/or dirty, they need cleaning. Rust can be removed with wire wool; all-purpose cleaner removes oil easily.

Attach the charger's negative lead to the negative battery terminal, then attach the positive lead to the positive terminal. If you're charging the battery while it's still in the car, check the charger's manual to see whether the charger needs to be earthed on an area of unpainted metal on the car like a bolt or bracket. Avoid anything connected to the fuel or electrical systems.

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