



Low cost car batteries

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One part common to nearly every vehicle, even electric vehicles, is the 12-volt battery under the hood powering your lights, window motors, seat motors, infotainment system, and even the ignition if you have an internal combustion vehicle. 12 V batteries will wear out over time, and part of car ownership is replacing that battery when its time comes.

As we proceed through our story, we are going to drop the 12 V and just use the term battery. If you are looking for the cost to replace an electric vehicle's high-voltage battery, here is where you can find that answer.

The best way to find out you need a new battery is for your mechanic to say you need one following a battery check during routine maintenance. If the battery is older than 36 months, we suggest you take the mechanic's advice and replace it.

Other signs of a dying battery are what you might expect. That dreaded clickety-clickety sound when you try to start the vehicle. Or worse, nothing at all. You may get a battery warning light on your dash, or you may not.

Most batteries die on the first very cold day of late fall. Batteries are able to operate better in mild temperatures. Just like the Car Talk staff! The saying goes, "It's summer that kills the battery, and the funeral is held in early winter." Or something like that. Who are we to argue with proverbs?

When you purchase a new vehicle, it usually comes with two warranties. The first is usually a 3 to 5-year "bumper to bumper warranty," and the second is a 5 to 10-year "powertrain warranty." Read your owner's manual on page one billion and fifty-six, and you may discover the battery is excluded from both of these warranties. It may have a one-year or some other duration. Automakers like to pretend your battery is not their problem. Even though no car will move without a properly operating battery.

Premature battery failures are not uncommon. There is a Subaru battery reimbursement campaign underway now, and many other brands have extended warranties on the battery that was supplied with the new vehicle. If your relatively new vehicle has a battery problem, it is worth calling your dealer to ask if such a program is in effect for your model. If not, ask what the price is for a battery replacement and call a few other places as well.

You may get lucky and have a car that can be jump-started and run. If you do, call around your local area to see who can supply you with a new battery. If your car is not running, AAA is an ideal resource to help you.

"AAA members appreciate our battery service because we come to them. The majority of our battery service



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calls come from members whose batteries have died overnight--frequently on cold winter mornings, but some members take our advice to call for a battery service in the warmer months simply to test an aging battery and avoid getting stranded once the seasons change."

If you are a AAA member, the company can often dispatch a mobile battery replacement vehicle and technician. AAA can replace your battery for you right in your driveway. We've done it and found AAA's battery replacement cost to be fair. The service is unbeatable. AAA will even do some diagnostics on your vehicle to help determine if the battery was simply drained down accidentally or if it is indeed dead. The company will not replace any battery that is not in need of replacement. We find this to be a great policy that instills consumer trust.

Another way to replace a car battery is to do it yourself. There are local retailers who will sell you a charged battery ready for installation. They will often want your old battery as part of the deal. Batteries are made primarily from lead and sulfuric acid, so you must ensure they are properly returned or recycled.

Batteries retail for as low as \$100 and can rise higher in price. Don't buy more than you need. A "bigger" battery is not better. There are some new technologies available, such as absorbed glass matt (AGM) batteries, and perhaps you will find another type. Just get what your car had previously. The brand name means very little. There are really just a couple of large battery makers in America, and the brands are just retailers' way of trying to differentiate themselves in your mind.

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