

SAVVA Technical Tip 145 – Starting problems

This article is aimed at newer members to the hobby, who like myself, don't come from a fix-it-up background. We have to remember mechanics take years to learn their trade and there will be times we will be reminded of this. We should be able to sort out most problems but every now and then we will be reminded we aren't trained mechanics - and I have just been reminded of this.

One of my cars has been giving starting problems. After standing for a few days it would be difficult to start, however, once started, it was good for the rest of the day. The problem started over a year ago and become progressively worse. The time came when I had to do something about it.

I started with the Carburettor but it wasn't that because even after pouring a gallop of petrol down it's throat it should have at least popped or coughed but didn't. I replaced the plugs and checked the spark which seemed okay. I'm always reminded that if you have compression at the right time together with fuel and spark something should happen – but it didn't.

In case there was an intermittent problem in the distributor I stripped it down to the last nut and bolt replacing points, condenser, fly lead etc – still dead. I replaced all the wiring from the fuse box to the coil and then to the distributor. Still dead. At this stage I was once again reminded that I was a mechanical ignoramus and not a qualified mechanic. Because of their experience I'm sure they would have been able to identify the problem. Unfortunately in my case it was a process of elimination. The only item not replaced was the coil but I knew this couldn't be the problem as there was spark !!!! However, out of desperation I decided to change the coil. For years I've had a filthy, dirty, rusty, disgusting looking 6 volt coil on the shelf and decided to try it just in case.

Guess what – hallelujah! success. I only have to breath on the starter button and it starts every time. Years ago I recall reading or a hearing a discussion about red and blue sparking which quoted that they under compression a red spark may be useless as it's like blowing a candle out. A hot blue spark is needed - so the problem was a weak coil.

See picture of coils. The good, bad, & ugly. Like so many things in life – it's not always the nice shiny or pretty ones that are the best. Appearances can be deceptive.

