



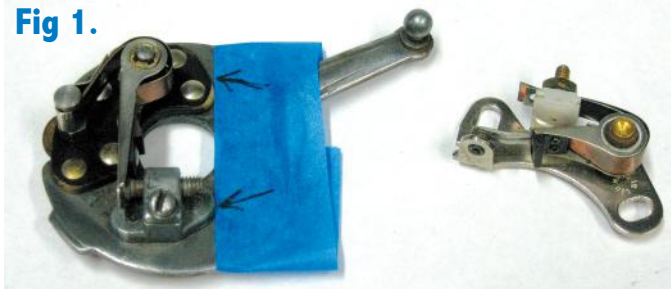
Original Points vs Modern Points

How to Improve Modern Points

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Really? There is no comparison to modern points! Here are the reasons why modern points are superior to original points. Original points are two parts which can cause minor alignment issues with the point breaker arm assembly (A-12199) and point block (A-12160). Modern points are mounted on the same assembly so they are always aligned center point to center point (Fig.1). Modern points have a heavy-duty spring and extra thick contact arm to prevent flexing and point floating. Point floating occurs when the points bounce off of the distributor cam due to weak spring tension or twisting of the point arm due to higher RPM's. This condition can happen at speeds of 45 MPH or higher in a Model A. This does not happen with modern points. Point floating will cause inconsistent high voltage to the spark plugs, causing engine miss and loss of power. This is why strong springs and strong contact arms are needed.

Fig 1.



Original points use a fiber contact for the rubbing block and it wears very fast, changing the point gap setting. Adjustment is needed every 500 to 1,000 miles, and the fiber rubbing block needs frequent lubrication. Modern points use Teflon, nylon, or phenolic rubbing blocks. The point gap should be checked every 5,000 miles and the rubbing block needs very minor lubrication.

Original point contacts are made from brass or phosphor-bronze. These two metals are prone to pitting, wearing, and burning. Point burning is easily caused when the engine is not running but the ignition key is in the on position. If the contact points happen to be together, current flows to the coil, causing overheating and possible damage to the coil. It also places a drain on the battery. The cheaper brass and bronze contact points heat up during the current flow and will overheat, causing a dark glaze which in turn causes resistance and voltage drop. If the ignition is left on long enough, it can semi-weld the contact points together (burning). The contact points need to be free of pits and depressions; therefore they must be dressed with a stone. Modern contact points are made in four different grades ranging in retail prices of \$4, \$12, \$21, and \$30 dollars. The cheaper points have brass

Fig 2.



or bronze contact tips and a very thin insulator between the point arm and electrical contact (Fig.2). They can short out at that space. They too are prone to pitting and burning. The \$21 set, the contact tips are made of tungsten and not prone to pitting or burning. The most expensive set of contact points are made of platinum. These will not pit or burn and they withstand high temperatures. They also have a very thick insulator between the point arm and electrical contact (Fig.3), as do the tungsten sets. Most automotive retailers guarantee these points for three to five years of service. In Model A years that would be 100,000 miles, or a lifetime. I purchased my points from my friendly Ford parts department. I used the platinum points on my Model A and have 20,000 miles on the same set of points. Only twice in that number of miles did they need the gap adjusted. The rubbing block is semi-self-lubricating and needs very little lubrication, but does require some lubrication.

Fig 3.





Fig 4a.

Modern points give you less maintenance, easier starting, smoother running engine, and more reliable voltage to the spark plugs.

This setup also moves the condenser to a higher protected place, away from engine and exhaust heat. Modern condensers contain Mylar foil windings, which help to prevent damage from heat and offer protection from point pitting. Modern condensers are easy to replace compared to original condensers that have two tiny screws in the horizontal position. The modern condenser has a nut that needs to be loosened one half turn and one vertical screw to remove. To aid in the removal of small screws, I use a 'clip & grip screwdriver' (Fig.4a). These screwdrivers have a positive spring grip holding action so that if bumped or dropped they will still hold the screw (Fig. 4b). Magnetic screwdrivers are not a positive grip; therefore the screw can still be dropped.

The only negative thing to say about modern points is that they are hard to adjust. This is incorrect, because people do not understand



Fig 5.

how adjustment works with modern points. If you look at Fig.5, there is a notch in the point base to insert a screwdriver to move the points. The problem is that the reproduction manufactures forgot to put the pivot point on the upper distributor plate. Modern points can easily be adjusted by inserting a screwdriver into the notch (Fig.6).

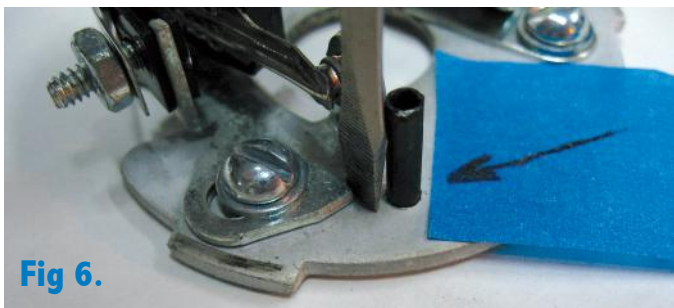


Fig 6.



Fig 4b.

The next part of this article will give step by step instructions on how to install the pivot point into the upper distributor plate.

1. Remove the upper plate from the distributor. Removal of the points and condenser are optional.



Fig 7.

2. Locate a hole 7/16 inch from the inside corner of the upper plate extension and 1/4 inch from the outside edge of the plate with the spark arm to your right (Fig.7). These measurements are for short 4-inch or 6-inch screwdrivers and can be adjusted to fit your screwdriver. Note that this location is for the reproduction upper plates. The original plates have holes that can be used as pry points.

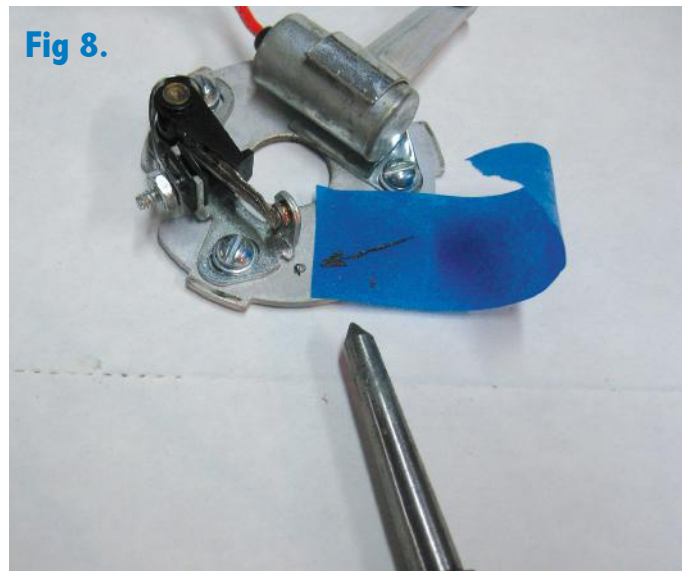


Fig 8.

3. Center punch the hole (Fig.8) so the drill bit will not wander when starting the drilling operation.

4. Drill a 1/8 inch diameter hole clear through the upper plate. Dress any burrs from the hole.



5. Use a 1/8 diameter by either 1/2 or 5/8 inch long roll pin. Roll pins are spring steel with a slot cut end to end. The spring being compressed holds the roll pin securely in place. I recommend that a solid flat surface be used so the upper disturber plate does not get bent during the installing of the roll pin. A 5/32 roll pin punch should be used (**Fig.9**). A roll pin punch has a semicircle ball that fits inside the roll pin to securely hold it in place. A ball peen hammer or regular drift pin punch will flare out the top of the roll pin.

6. When installing the roll pin it should extend past the bottom of the plate by 1/16 to 1/8 of an inch (**Fig.10**).

7. Reassemble and check the point gap at .018 to .020. As a note, original point gaps are set between .018 and .022 because the fiber blocks wear fast.

Your modern points are now easy to adjust and you will be very happy with the results! As a cautionary note, if you are going to purchase a reproduction upper plate, spend a little more money and buy the American made unit. These plates are made to the original thickness standards whereas the foreign made plates are thinner so they fit sloppy in the distributor. When advancing the spark lever, the plate will be forced to a slight angle, affecting the points and causing possible shorts. Both the USA and foreign made reproduction units use the cheap modern points. These should be replaced with tungsten or platinum contact points.

In conclusion, modern points have a stronger spring, stronger contact arm and tougher rubbing block. The actual contact points are smooth and meet squarely over their entire surface. Maintenance of these points is very minimal. Their use in a Model A distributor provides a steady reliable voltage to the spark plugs, and does not affect the original appearance of the Model A.

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