Top tips for new MGB and MGBGT enthusiasts

Many new owners of the classic MGB Roadster and MGBGT models are keen to pick up the tips that fellow enthusiasts who have known the model for many years can pass on, so here we have a checklist of the top tips for new MGB and MGBGT enthusiasts. Although many new enthusiasts buying an MGB are people who had experience of cars in the mid and late 1970s when the MGB was produced, there is an encouraging increase in younger members buying an MGB or MGBGT. For them the MGB will feel like a car from an earlier age in terms of its handling and maintenance, so routine maintenance like topping up the SU carburettor dampers with engine oil may not be something they will know is very worthwhile as it makes the MGB so much more enjoyable to drive, with a smoother pick up and acceleration and a less frisky engine at slow speeds. These top tips start with some safety checks and we would particularly draw you attention to the need to have your brake servo checked, or better still replaced.

- **Have your brake servo checked or better still have it replaced – an important safety check**
  Fortunately brake failures from servo problems are rare but, unlike difficulties with slave cylinders where early warning signs can usually be detected, early warning signs of potential servo failure are few. The key feature of a series of alarming servo failures – almost 20 - reported by members with Factory MGBGTVs is the loss of braking is very rapid indeed as the servo swallows the brake fluid! Fortunately the failures have been at low speeds and without damage to the car or personal injury. The modest cost of a servo replacement is a small price to pay for something which might save a serious incident.

  More on brake servo failures
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/servofailurecaution.htm

  How does an MGB brake servo work?
  http://www.v8register.net/FilesV8WN/Brake%20working%20note%20190109.pdf

- **Change your engine oil regularly**
  Regular oil changes with an MGB engine are worthwhile to avoid the oil passageways to the rocker shafts sludging up. So an oil change every 3,000 miles or at least annually is vital, particularly if the use of the car is modest and infrequent. Always change the oil filter at the same time. If you do not use the car over the winter months but feel that it needs to be run every so often, make sure that you drive the car for long enough to warm up and thus drive out any moisture in the oil; not only in the engine, but also in the transmission and rear axle. Probably a run of 10 miles is enough. If you don’t want to drive it in wet and salty conditions, don’t start it; wait for a dry day.

- **What are the normal oil pressure figures on an MGB?**
  The MGB Repair Operations manual says the **oil pressure while driving should be 50 to 80psi and 10 to 25psi at idle.** The pressure relief valve is set to open at 70psi so it is unlikely that you’ll see pressure over this. My ’78 MGBGT is typically about 55psi.

- **Top up your carburettors with oil - smoother pick up and acceleration and a less frisky engine at slow speeds**
  Topping up the dampers on the twin SU HIF carburettors on an MGBGTV8 is a very worthwhile simple service routine which can make driving the MGBGTV8 so much more enjoyable with a smoother pick up and acceleration and a less frisky engine at slow speeds. Enthusiasts not familiar with SU carburettors may not be aware of the benefits of regular damper topping-up or what to do, so this note is a straightforward guide. This procedure is set out f the Driver’s Handbook. Unscrew the black plastic cap at the top of each carburettor suction chamber and gently lift the piston and damper up to the top of their travel. Do not attempt to pull them right out. Fill the circular opening at the top of the suction chamber with engine oil (preferably 20-50 multigrade) until the oil level is just visible where there is a slight change in the internal diameter of the tube. Carefully push the damper down until the black cap contacts the top of the suction chamber. You may need to repeat the process to achieve the oil level noted above and then screw the black cap on firmly on the suction chamber.

  What is the function of the damper in the SU carburetor?
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/V8NOTE387.htm

- **How can I upgrade twin 6 volt batteries to a modern single 12 volt battery?**
  This upgrade is one most enthusiasts can undertake themselves and there are several options. See our workshop notes via our battery conversion information gateway.
  http://www.v8register.net/subpages/V8NOTEbatteryconversionindex.htm

- **How can I tell how old my tyres are?**
  The tyre sidewall markings have an elongated circle within which is the data of manufacture – week number and year. See our useful guide which shows you how to read the tyre sidewall markings including the speed ratings.
  http://www.v8register.net/articles/Tyre%20sidewall%20markings%20explained%20SF%20R9%202021.7.08.pdf
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- **Replacement tyres – what tyres are popular with MGB enthusiasts?**
  
  There is an ageing effect on tyre rubber which reduces the flexibility of the rubber to something that feels like wood with consequent effects on grip, handling and ride. So by the time your tyres are around seven to eight years old the suppleness of most tyres is reduced to a level which will be compromising the ride and handling. Even though there may well be plenty of tread remaining on tyres fitted to a classic car covering modest annual mileages, they will need replacing for both safety reasons and to enable you to enjoy the improved bump absorption and grip that new rubber will provide. But what tyres do you choose as replacements? Well currently the Continental Contact 2 tyre is popular choice for MGBGTV8 enthusiasts and it is available in a 175/80 R14 88H size with the correct speed rating for the model. See our replacement tyre webpages and archived V8 Bulletin Board discussions on the topic.
  
  [http://www.v8register.net/subpages/tyrereplacementV8BBthreads1.htm](http://www.v8register.net/subpages/tyrereplacementV8BBthreads1.htm)

- **What tyre pressures are suggested today for an MGBGTV8?**
  
  Tyre technology has moved on a great deal since the original cross-ply tyres fitted to the early MGB models and then later the iconic Pirelli Cinturato radials in the early and mid-1970s. The size of tyre originally fitted to the MGB models has changed over the years too – originally 155x14s, later 165x14s and on the later LE models 185x70 14s. Then there is the development of the tyres in terms of new designs and rubber compounds providing enhanced wet and dry grip and braking and more comfortable ride characteristics too. So faced with those changes it is proving very difficult these days to find authoritative information of the pressures for the modern tyres in the sizes enthusiasts use on their MGBs. So here is a general guide:

  5.60-14 cross ply: 19 (F) – 22 (R) lb./sq. in
  6.60-14 cross ply: 20 (F) – 23 (R) lb./sq. in
  Radial-ply tyres: 24 (F) – 26 (R) lb./sq. in
  For sustained high speeds increase the above pressures by 6lb/sq. in.
  Always check with the tyre manufacturer for their recommended pressures for the MGB and MGBGT models.

- **What are the key issues to consider when deciding whether to fit 175 or 185 tyres on an MGBGTV8?**
  
  See our useful note on the four sets of issues you will need to review in assessing your tyre size choice.
  [http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news110718replacementtyres.htm](http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news110718replacementtyres.htm)

- **Using a jack supplied as original equipment with an MGB**
  
  See our note on using the original Factory jack supplied with the MGB model.
  [http://www.v8register.net/FilesV8WN/120809%20using%20jacks%20with%20the%20V8%20and%20RV8.pdf](http://www.v8register.net/FilesV8WN/120809%20using%20jacks%20with%20the%20V8%20and%20RV8.pdf)
  [http://www.v8register.net/subpages/V8NOTE453.htm](http://www.v8register.net/subpages/V8NOTE453.htm)

- **What manuals and handbooks are available for the MGB models?**
  
  We have a useful checklist of the manuals and handbooks, some of which you can download on the V8 Website.
  [http://www.v8register.net/MGB/workshopmanuals.htm](http://www.v8register.net/MGB/workshopmanuals.htm)

- **Which brake fluid should I use on an MGB?**
  
  This is a subject where some people hold strong views for silicon or mineral fluids. We have a comprehensive six page article on the advantages and disadvantages prepared by a fellow member, Bob Owen.
  [http://www.v8register.net/articles/Brake%20fluids%20article%20R5%20Bob%20Owen%20230109.pdf](http://www.v8register.net/articles/Brake%20fluids%20article%20R5%20Bob%20Owen%20230109.pdf)

- **Can I use unleaded fuel in an MGB?**
  
  Can I use unleaded fuel in my MGB with the original heads? It’s a regular query from members so our note provides a clarification.
  [Link to follow](#)

- **Concerns with current antifreeze formulations with classic cars**
  
  The Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs has identified concerns over the latest formulations and their unsuitability for classic cars. See our news item on this current topic.
  Update: [http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news010410antifreeze.htm](http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news010410antifreeze.htm)
  Original article: [http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news090310antifreeze.htm](http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news090310antifreeze.htm)

- **Where can I get an MGB serviced by an MG specialist who knows the model?**
  
  We maintain a listing of service specialists and spares suppliers which have been recommended by fellow members. It’s called the V8LIFELINE and you can access it online via the V8 Website.
  [http://www.v8register.net/FilesV8WN/120310%20V8LIFE%2028%20LHS%20MGB%20V8%20RV8%20engines%20on%20the%20market.pdf](http://www.v8register.net/FilesV8WN/120310%20V8LIFE%2028%20LHS%20MGB%20V8%20RV8%20engines%20on%20the%20market.pdf)

- **Checking the steering rack mounts for signs of cracks developing**
  
  Routine inspections at Brown & Gammons of the steering rack mountings on an MGB V8 Roadster built from a LHD rubber bumper MGB roadster reimported from the US and on an RV8 have revealed serious cracks in the steering rack mounts attached to the crossmember. As the consequences of a complete failure would be serious, members with MGBs and MGB derivatives need to have the mounts inspected as a matter of routine. The cracks are in the "U"
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shaped mount and not on the welded joint with the crossmember. The leading MGB specialists will include a crack check as part of service work on your car. It needs a very bright inspection lamp and a close examination to see hairline cracks developing.
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/RV8NOTE241.htm
There is a strengthening kit – details are described in RV8NOTE242.
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/RV8NOTE242.htm

Thinking of getting an MGB or MGBGT?

Online buying guide
Our online buying guide helps you research the MGV8 models, check the vehicle history of a car, check and test drive a car, negotiate a deal and buy safely. Selling advice too. There is special website for enthusiasts thinking of buying an MGB at:
http://www.buyinganmg.com

See our buying guide book
If you are an enthusiast wanting to get an MGB then we have a useful 60 page book called “So you want to buy an MGBGT V8 or MG RV8?” available from our Club Office at £9.95 including UK P&P. Our buying guide helps you research the MGV8 models, check the vehicle history of a car, check and test drive a car, negotiate a deal and buy safely. Selling advice too.
http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news160410booklaunch.htm

See our MGB Workshop Notes series
See our spares and maintenance tips contributed by fellow members in a successful series running since 1978!
http://www.v8register.net/MGB/workshopnotes.htm

Benefits of joining the MGB Register and MG Car Club
Whilst the MGB Register’s website is run on an “open to all” basis, we do that to provide a welcome to new enthusiasts and to encourage them to join the MGB Register and the MG Car Club. The benefits of membership are very worthwhile and the annual subscription, which includes a monthly 100 page colour Club magazine. We do urge you to register your MGB or MGBGT with us and join the MG Car Club.

Joining the MG Car Club
http://www.mgcc.co.uk/joinrenew/join-now/

Joining the MGB Register, part of the MG Car Club
http://www.mgb-register.org/MGB-Register/Register.html