



Battery conditioners

This note covers **battery conditioners** only and is based on members' feedback of their choice of conditioner and experience with it. Here Peter Spurrs reports on the feedback.

Back in the pre-electronics days, batteries on little used cars were often left to discharge. From time-to-time, diligent owners would check the state of the battery and attach a battery charger to remedy the situation. Then along came the battery conditioner, an electronic charger which could be left connected to the car when parked up in a garage providing trickle charging and when fully charged it would switch to a monitoring function checking the level of charge and when that level fell it would resume trickle charging. So, it was an intelligent device and on some battery conditioners they also had a "Recond" function when reconditioning procedures were carried out to maintain the condition of the battery. When left connected the battery the conditioner would keep the battery in tip-top condition with little or no input from the owner.

Traditional **battery chargers** are covered in an article contributed by Nic Houslip which highlights prudent additional electrical protection using an RCD (Residual Current Device).

Brands available

Based on members' feedback, the two most popular battery brands of conditioner are CTEK and Accumate. There are other well-known brands such as Sealey. At the low-cost end of the market, there are own makes such as Ultimate Speed from Lidl.

Which to buy?

All brands were shown to be effective and reliable. Comment was made that the premium brands were more likely to be 'made to a standard' than 'made to a price'. It was also mentioned in the feedback that the premium brands remembered the user settings between uses, whilst the lower end units required to be reset each time the power was restored. Should there be a power cut and the conditioner not reset itself, the battery would be allowed to go flat.

Condition of the battery

For any conditioner to be effective, the **battery itself must be in good condition**. Whilst the conditioner can charge the battery, it can provide no more than the battery can hold. A fully conditioned dud battery will not start the car. A 12V battery upgrade, from the original twin 6V lead acid batteries, has the benefit of more modern battery technology and both better availability and price advantages.

If an MG V8 is likely to be used when a heavy electrical load is needed – for example with headlights, wipers and heater blower running - then a twin 12V battery upgrade is well worth considering.

[More](#)

Plug and play

Once connected to a car, battery conditioners are left in place until the car is needed again. In instances where the car is laid up for the winter, that can be several months. Apart from the usual periodic check to make sure all is well; the unit can be left to do its job.

Basic electrical protection

To provide some overload protection, the conditioner has a fuse in the power plug. Some brands come fitted with a 13A fuse which will support a load of just under 3KW. A 3A fuse (or 1A fuse if you can find one) would be more suitable.

Performance of members' battery conditioners

Apart from one instance, feedback from members indicates they are all are pleased with the performance of their conditioners, some of which have been in use for over 10 years. There was one instance of a conditioner 'cooking' the battery. To quote Ian Ailes "After about 6 years, I noticed it was always on yellow. It overcharged the battery and boiled off the water and that finished the battery". Moral: if something doesn't look right, check it.

Where to mount the conditioner unit?

The general principle is to mount the unit where it is safe and ventilated and where any heat generated can be dissipated. Wall mounting is the obvious place. Soft and flammable surfaces are to be avoided. Some users secure the unit in a box. See our note on wall mounted brackets for conditioners. [More](#)

How to connect the battery conditioner to the car

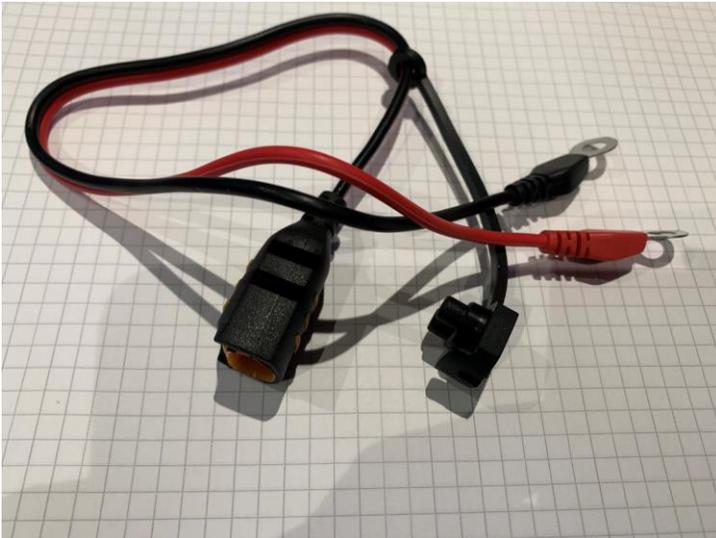
There are several options. The easiest is to plug in via the **cigarette lighter**. In the MGBGT V8, the cigarette lighter circuit is 'always on' (presumably to cater for the desperate driver in the 1970s who couldn't wait to light up), providing a ready contact to the battery. Clearly, a good connection is required.



Crocodile clips are available as temporary connections. They are less convenient to use, typically requiring access to the battery compartment which is below the rear seat.



Permanent battery connections are available. Once the terminals are connected to the battery, it is a simple matter of connecting the lead from the unit to the lead from the battery. As can be seen from the photo, there is a safety cover for the battery side connector when not in use.



Security of all connections was noted by several respondents. Not only does the electrical connection from the conditioner to the vehicle need to be secure, the battery terminals need to be clean and secure too. On the factory V8, the batteries sit below the rear seat and are open to the elements. Periodic cleaning and checking security are recommended.

Disconnect the conditioner before starting the car

Finally, it may be a statement of the blindingly obvious, but the battery conditioner does need to be disconnected before the car is used. The more optimistic amongst us may rely on memory, but others will need to find a way of being prompted. One example is to route the conditioner cable over the seat or steering wheel to make it obvious the conditioner is connected.