

Top tips for a new MG RV8 enthusiast



Many new owners of the classic MG RV8 model 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 a new MG RV8 enthusiast. Although many new enthusiasts buying an MG RV8 are people who had experience of sports cars in the mid and late 1970s, increasingly there is an encouraging increase in younger members buying an MG RV8. For them the RV8 will feel like a car from an earlier age in terms of its handling and maintenance. The tips start with some prudent safety and maintenance checks.

- **Check your coolant expansion tank is not overfilled**

It is essential you do not overfill the expansion tank. There is a "Coolant Level" indicator on the side of the expansion tank – see the diagram to the left. If it is too full then you can get syphonage from the radiator and then consequent overheating.

Source: RV8 Owner's Handbook
AKM7144ENG



TOPPING-UP

The coolant level should be checked **WHEN THE SYSTEM IS COLD**, and topped up with a 50% mixture of anti-freeze and water.

Top up to the '**COOLANT LEVEL**' as indicated by the arrows.

If the level has fallen appreciably, suspect leakage or overheating and arrange for your dealer to examine the vehicle.

- **Replace the plastic coolant filler plug with a brass unit**

The original coolant filler plug on the top of the vertical RV8 filler tube was produced in plastic and many members have reported problems with it over time. Most RV8 enthusiasts replace that plastic filler plug for a much better unit made in brass with a rubber sealing washer, part number **KTP9401** or **ARA2404**.

- **Change your engine oil regularly**

The importance of regular oil changes with a V8 engine cannot be repeated too often because the system is a low pressure-high volume system and the oil passageways are prone to sludging up. So an oil change every 3,000 miles or at least annually is vital. See photos of dirty rocker covers. [More](#)

- **What are the oil pressure figures on an RV8?**

No oil pressure gauge was fitted to production RV8s, only a low oil pressure warning lamp. The oil pressure data given on page "General Data 1" of the RV8 Repair Manual AKM7153:

Oil pressure at 2,400rpm - 2.05 to 2.70 bar (29.7 to 39.2psi).

Oil pressure warning light switch opens at 0.25 bar (3.6psi).

The bar/psi conversion website is at: <http://www.convertunits.com/from/psi/to/bar>

- **Remember the V8 engine in an RV8 is a low revving engine**

The Rover V8 engine in the standard form used in the 3.5 MGBGT V8 model and later in the 3.9 injected RV8 version is a low revving engine with good torque characteristics. These characteristics give the RV8 and MGBGT V8 a relaxed feel which is a major source of the appeal of a V8 powered MG. So for normal driving trying to rev over 4,500rpm is unnecessary as most performance for normal road use is available in the rev range 2,500 to 3,500rpm. The gearing quoted in the RV8 Repair Manual AKM7143ENG on page "General Data 2" under Rear Axle is 28.10 mph/1,000rpm. So at 70 mph in top gear is 2,491 rpm, at 80 mph is 2,847 rpm and at 90 mph is 3,202 rpm. The idle speed is quoted on the page "Engine Tuning Data 1" as 700 +/- 25 rpm.

- **Do not tow an MG RV8 – please make a note of this caution!**

Care is needed with the idea of having an RV8 towed anywhere - it must be taken on a trailer. The reason is the gearbox has forced lubrication from a pump driven by the input side (engine shaft) of the gearbox and not the output shaft. When the engine is not running there is no oil circulating in the gearbox. Towing an RV8 with the rear wheels on the road will mean the gearbox will be in action with no forced lubrication and damage to the gearbox may result. Note: the caution above applies to **both gearboxes** fitted to the RV8 during its production run - the LT77S gearbox and the later R380 gearbox fitted from VIN 0644.

<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/RV8NOTE252.htm>

- **Avoid the nonsense of being required by some insurers to fit an expensive Thatcham 1 security system**

The original security system on the RV8 is good, particularly the volumetric sensor monitoring people reaching into the car when the hood is down. The "Thatcham" categories were introduced just after the RV8 was launched so the RV8's immobiliser never had a "Thatcham categorisation". The expensive retrofitting requirement of some

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insurers seems more driven by the "tick-box" mentality of insurers rather than a sensible view of the capabilities and performance of the original security system fitted to the MG RV8. Why not check out the "**Abingdon Policy**" for the RV8 offered by Peter Best Insurance Services to avoid the nonsense of being required to fit an expensive Thatcham 1 system often demanded by other insurers. This useful tip can save you the additional expenditure for an unnecessary retrofit.

<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/RV8NOTE117updated.htm#peterbest>

- **How do I know which gearbox I have in my RV8?**

The five speed gearbox fitted to the RV8 was originally the LT77S, a variant of the Rover SD1 gearbox. At VIN 0644 the gearbox was changed to the R380. They can be distinguished by the reverse gear position – up to the left on an LT77S and down to the right on an R380. John Yea clarified at a talk on the RV8 manufacturing project in 2003 that the gearbox change was simply because the R380 was the gearbox MG Rover had introduced across its vehicle product range. See our article at: <http://www.v8register.net/subpages/RV8NOTE404.htm>

- **Check the vacuum pipe on reimported RV8s has been modified**

With reimported RV8s a modification is necessary to convert the advance and retard set up. If it has not been picked up by the reimporter, then you can get a kit from Clive Wheatley and RV8NOTE258 explains how to check whether the modification has been made and if not, how to do so with the kit.

<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/RV8NOTE258.htm>

- **Check the windscreen surround has no signs of corrosion**

Whilst the anti corrosion treatment of the RV8 bodyshells was far, far better than that on the earlier MGBGTV8, there is one rust prone area on an RV8 and it is on the steel windscreen surround. It affects the legs of the unit so is not necessarily evident from an inspection of the surround on the car, but a trained eye can spot signs which suggest potential problems. There are several RV8 Workshop Notes on the topic but RV8NOTE225 provides photos of the corrosion seen on a number of RV8s. The good news is replacement surrounds are available from Brown & Gammons and from Clive Wheatley. See **Section 16: Body** of the detailed index to the series for more details – you can download a free copy on the V8 Website at:

<http://www.v8register.net/FilesRV8WN/RV8NOTE0%20Index.pdf>

- **Where can I get my RV8 wheels refurbished?**

The distinctive alloy spoked wheels fitted to the RV8 do need regular cleaning and in some cases surface maintenance. See the "wheel refurbisher" section of our online V8LIFELINE – a listing a specialist providing spares and services for V8 enthusiasts – for details of specialist recommended by fellow members. There are many RV8 Workshop Notes on wheel maintenance including RV8NOTE15, RV8NOTE261, RV8NOTE265, RV8NOTE276, RV8NOTE314 and RV8NOTE317. See **Section 15: Wheels & tyres** of the detailed index to the series for more details – you can download a free copy on the V8 Website at:

<http://www.v8register.net/FilesRV8WN/RV8NOTE0%20Index.pdf>

- **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%2021.7.08.pdf>

- **How old can tyres be before it is wise to change them?**

Over time the suppleness of the rubber reduces so that by around 7 to 8 years old the ageing effect on the rubber will have reduced the flexibility of the rubber to something that begins to have characteristics similar to that of wood with consequent adverse effects on handling and ride. For most classic car enthusiasts doing modest annual mileages this will inevitably mean the tyres age well before they wear out. For many it will feel wrong to throw away tyres which appear to have plenty of tread remaining but with a high performance car which has a suspension package from an earlier age, good dry and wet grip and braking performance are essential together with supple rubber for a comfortable ride. So be prepared for a tyre change well before 10 years and preferably at 7 or 8 years from new. If you are offered "brand new" tyres that have been in dark storage and are claimed by the supplier to be "as good as new", then walk away as they will not be a wise purchase. Remember your classic car Insurance policy will include a condition that you maintain your car in a roadworthy condition – tyres well over their prudent service life may well be regarded as not meeting that condition and in the event of your making a claim, a vehicle inspection by an insurance assessor may well note that in their report and the insurer may regard that as a breach of the policy and decline to pay out. See also the ROSPA advice on tyre ageing:

<http://www.rospa.com/roadsafety/adviceandinformation/vehiclesafety/tyresafety/tyres-information.aspx#aging>

- **What brands of replacement tyres are popular with V8 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

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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 Sport Contact 2s seem to suit the RV8 well and are a popular choice for MG RV8 enthusiasts. See our replacement tyre webpages and archived V8 Bulletin Board discussions on the topic.

<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/gatewaytyresindex1.htm>

- **What tyre pressures are suggested today for an MG RV8?**

As tyre technology has moved on a great deal since the launch of the MG RV8 model in the early 1990s, it is proving very difficult these days to find authoritative information of the pressures for the modern tyres in sizes which fit the RV8. So we contacted Ron Gammons at leading MG RV8 specialists Brown & Gammons in Baldock for his views and suggestions. He says “an RV8 has a much larger contact patch (the area of tyre tread in contact with the road surface) than an MGBGTV8 because it has larger tyres on wider wheels. With lower pressures the tyres squirm about and higher pressures help to reinforce the tyre walls. To maintain ride comfort you need soft tyres and to handle well they need to be firmer. Whilst the RV8 Owner’s Handbook (AKM7144ENG) shows the pressures at **22 (F) and 24 (R)**, personally I tend to run higher pressures at **28 (F) and 28 (R)**. But the standard dampers are so poor and often tired too, so you need to consider whether a routine replacement is due or better still an upgrade which can provide better handling and ride performance.”

The RV8 Owner's Handbook (AKM7144ENG) shows the pressures on page 68 under General Data: Normal conditions: 22 (F) and 24 (R)	Suggestions from Ron Gammons at Brown & Gammons, MG RV8 specialists at Baldock: Normal conditions: 28 (F) and 28 (R)
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See our note:

<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news291210tyrepressures.htm>

- **What can I do if the veneer on my elm burr door cappings or dashboard is cracked?**

The elm burr dashboard and door cappings can suffer from cracks in the veneer. This is often the case with reimported RV8s which may have had periods parked out in hot sunshine. The fault can be easily remedied by a number of specialist craftsmen who can return the trim to you as good as new and at a moderate cost. Take care refurbishing individual items of burr elm trim as it can be very difficult to match for colour. There are three RV8 Workshop Notes on the topic – RV8NOTE154, RV8NOTE277 and RV8NOTE282. See **Section 19: Interior & instruments** of the detailed index to the series for more details – you can download a free copy on the V8 Website at: <http://www.v8register.net/FilesRV8WN/RV8NOTE0%20Index.pdf>

- **What is that rattle from the cats?**

Barry Martin If you start to hear the dreaded death rattle from the underside of your RV8 then it is likely you will have to get some replacement cats. An inspection of the cats will be an MOT check too. A fellow RV8 member contributed RV8NOTE309 on where he found a good supplier. See **Section 1: Engine** of the detailed index to the series for more references to cats – you can download a free copy on the V8 Website at: <http://www.v8register.net/FilesRV8WN/RV8NOTE0%20Index.pdf>

- **What checks do I need to do with an RV8 with air conditioning?**

Check both fan belts on RV8s with air conditioning and make sure the aircon system is run each month. Prolonged inactivity can result in the aircon system malfunctioning which may then require an expensive re-gassing of the system. So “use it or lose it!” Some RV8 enthusiasts with a reimported Japanese specification RV8 decide that UK weather conditions do not justify the need for an aircon system and, to provide more passenger legroom, have the aircon system removed.

- **What is Testbook?**

Outwardly the MG RV8 appears a classic sports car but underneath the bonnet it is a very modern car with sophisticated engine management systems. Monitoring and maintaining those systems requires computing power which is where the state-of-the-art Rover Testbook comes in with its new system of fault diagnosis. The leading RV8 specialists will have access to Testbook.

<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/rovertestbook.htm>

- **How can I reduce the heavy steering on an RV8?**

Many enthusiasts comment the steering can feel heavy but this may be because they have become conditioned to the light steering effort with power assisted steering on modern cars they drive on a regular basis. There are two ways of reducing the steering effort on an RV8 – you can fit a castor reduction kit or retrofit a power assisted steering kit. With castor reduction it is essential you note the RV8 already has less castor angle than an MGB or MGBGTV8, in fact just under 4 degrees. So take great care with suppliers offering castor reduction wedges that

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remove 3 degrees of castor as you could end up with less than one degree of positive castor which some regard as undesirable even when modern tyres have improved self centre characteristics. With PAS kits there are essentially two options: an electro-hydraulic system involving major changes to the steering rack and housing the necessary oil reservoir and pipework or an electric PAS or EPAS system. If you do have your RV8 modified in these ways do remember you must notify your insurer of any "material change" made to your car in a safety critical area.

- **What manuals and handbooks are available for the MG RV8 model?**
The manuals you need for the RV8 model are conveniently supplied on an RV8 Technical Information CD available from Brown & Gammons. You can see the manuals by following the link:
<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/BandGRV8technicalinfoCD.htm>
- **Which brake fluid should I use on an MG RV8?**
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 V8 member, Bob Owen.
<http://www.v8register.net/articles/Brake%20fluids%20article%20R5%20Bob%20Owen%20230109.pdf>
- **Can I use unleaded fuel in an MG RV8?**
A regular query from members is "can I use unleaded fuel in my MG RV8 with the original heads?" The MG RV8 Repair Manual AKM7153ENG clarifies this in the **Information** section on the page **Engine Tuning 1** as:
Fuel grade 95 RON min UNLEADED
- **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>
Original article: <http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news090310antifreeze.htm>
- **Where can I get an MG RV8 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/lifeline.htm>
- **Checking the steering rack mounts for signs of cracks developing**
Routine inspections at Brown & Gammons of the steering rack mountings on a 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 on the crossmember. As the consequences of a complete failure would be serious, members with RV8s need to have the mounts inspected as a matter of urgency. The cracks are in the "U" shaped mount and not on the welded joint with the crossmember. The leading RV8 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>
- **Fitting a set of bespoke Spax shock absorbers improves handling and ride**
The new replacement Spax shock absorbers on offer from Clive Wheatley are a bespoke set of front and back units developed specifically for the RV8. They are the result of the skilful development work and thorough testing carried out by Spax which was commissioned by Clive. The Spax shock absorbers are a complete and balanced set of front and rear shock absorbers which has further improved the ride and handling of the RV8.
<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/RV8NOTE278.htm>
- **Hoyle suspension upgrades for an RV8**
A significant improvement in ride and handling can be achieved fitting a Hoyle independent rear suspension upgrade kit and/or a Hoyle front suspension upgrade.
<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/RV8NOTE310.htm>
<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/RV8NOTE311.htm>
Also see our RV8 suspension information gateway at: <http://www.v8register.net/gateway/rv8suspension.htm>
- **More useful information on maintaining an MG RV8**
See our webpage of links to more useful information.
<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/profileMGRV8index2info.htm>

Top tips for a new MG RV8 enthusiast

If you are an enthusiast wanting to get an MG RV8 then we have a buying guide online and as a book

- **Buying guide as a book – “So you want to buy an MGBGTV8 or RV8?”**

We have a useful 60 page book called “So you want to buy an MGBGTV8 or MG RV8?” packed with advice on how to research the MG models, how to check a car offered for sale, negotiate a deal, make a safe payment and check you have the necessary documents. It's some of the best information available with a five part guide to buying a classic MG, a sample receipt and advice on making a vehicle data check. Copies are available from our Club Office at £9.95 including UK P&P. <http://www.v8register.net/subpages/news160410booklaunch.htm>

- **Online buying guides** - there is a website with advice on buying any MG model at: <http://www.buyinganmg.com>
There is also a section of the V8 website for enthusiasts thinking of buying an MG RV8 at: <http://www.v8register.net/v8/index.htm>

- **RV8 profile, information and support**

<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/profileMGRV8index.htm>
<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/profileMGRV8index2info.htm>

If you need further help and advice on a buying an MGV8 or other topic or a query then you can:

- **Contact the V8 Helpline** via the link on the V8 Website homepage and speak with an enthusiast who knows the model. <http://www.v8register.net/buyershelpline.htm>
- **Search for the topic** using either the key word search box on the V8 Website homepage or the detailed Index to the popular V8 Workshop Notes series which has been running since 1978. There is a useful note with tips on searching for information on the V8 Website or V8 Bulletin Board. <http://www.v8register.net/subpages/v8bbsearchtips.htm>
- **Post a query as a message on the V8 Bulletin Board**
<http://www.v8registerdata.net/default.asp>
- **Information Gateways**
We have a series of Information Gateways which are webpages on key topics where there are links to articles, spares news and other resources on the V8 website. So in a couple of clicks you can find information on those topics. <http://www.v8register.net/subpages/gatewaysindex1.htm>

RV8 Workshop Notes series

- **How do I find useful tips on servicing and spares queries?**
You can check out your topic by looking through the contents of the series online and you can check your topic using the regularly updated **online index** to the whole RV8NOTES series. You can download a copy of the index online.
<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/RV8NOTEindex.htm>
<http://www.v8register.net/FilesRV8WN/120109%20RV8NOTES%20revealed.pdf>
- **How can I get a copy of a complete set of RV8 Workshop Notes on CD in PDF format?**
Visit the Online V8 Shop on the V8 website at: <http://www.v8register.net/V8Shop/v8publications.htm>
The Online V8 Shop is closed from time to time, so if you find it closed just contact the V8 Registrar for details of the standby arrangements at: v8registrar@v8register.net

Benefits of joining the V8 Register and MG Car Club

Whilst we run the V8 Website and V8 Bulletin Board on an “open to all” basis, we do that to provide a welcome to new enthusiasts and to encourage them to join the V8 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 MGBGTV8 with us and join the MG Car Club.

- **Joining the MG Car Club**
<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/subscriptions2.htm>
- **Joining the V8 Register**, part of the MG Car Club
<http://www.v8grapevine.net/>

V8 Website is a wonderful resource

The V8 Website has over 3,000 webpages or files and gets over 10,000 hits in a typical rolling 30 day period. Those hits are what are known as “unique hits” which do not include repeat hits from the same visitor in any individual day.

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With a large website packed with information it is essential to use the search tips to find answers to specific queries. So do use our search tips. For new members we have a “New Visitors’ Content Guide” which explains what information is available with links to the major sections. Our aim is to enable members to reach the information they need in two to three clicks so you will see there are many useful links on the V8 Website homepage which take you straight to the area you need.

<http://www.v8register.net/contentguide.htm>
www.v8register.net

Finally we have a feature not seen on many websites – a Recent Changes log – which provides you with links on a daily basis to all the new webpages or significant webpage updates. On average there are about three update links per day, so this facility enables frequent visitors to be able to go straight to the new content on the V8 Website.

Feedback is always welcome

So let us know what you feel. The V8 Register is a members’ group and contributions to the workshop notes series or other items are welcome to provide useful information or help for fellow members. The successful V8 Workshop Notes series, now into its 12th volume, is a clear example of that!

<http://www.v8register.net/subpages/anycommentscard.htm>