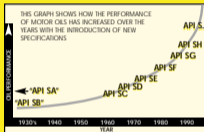


des Constructeurs Europeen d'Automobile (ACEA) system from Europe.

### THE API SYSTEM

The API designation is based on an alphabetical system, with the letters API being followed by either an 'S' (Service) series for passenger car petrol engines, or a 'C' (Commercial) series for diesel engines.



For the example of petrol engine qualities, specifications have advanced over the years from the pre 1930s SA through to today. The 'SA' category consisted solely of mineral oil, devoid of any additives to provide extra performance. As oil technology improved, specifications moved upwards, being introduced in the years shown.

### THE ACEA SYSTEM

The European ACEA system, introduced in

1996, includes a range of oils A1 low friction oils, A2 conventional oils for normal use, and A3 high performance engines or long drain intervals for petrol engines, and B1 low friction oils, B2 conventional oils

for mainstream use, B3 high performance engines or long drain intervals and B4 direct injection engines with special requirements for passenger car diesel engines. However, in the ACEA range, the higher numbers do not necessarily imply higher quality, and the manufacturer's recommendations should be sought.

*Any oil which does not carry an API or ACEA performance specification or some type of approval from a major vehicle manufacturer is highly suspect and must be assumed to fall into the lowest category, i.e. API SA, which became obsolete in the 1930s when the first additive engine oils (API SB) began to appear!*

It is essential that oils of at least the correct requirement are used, although higher specification oils, in the same category, should be used as soon as they become available if maximum benefits in fuel

economy, engine protection performance and operating costs are to be obtained. However, it must be appreciated that an engine which has been operating on a very poor-quality lubricant for some time may well be beyond saving, since it is likely to have suffered build-up of sludge deposits which could be displaced by the detergency power of a modern good-quality oil. Blocked oilways could well result.

Currently there is no UK legislation to ensure that all oils marketed are fit for the purpose, although it is the case in some other countries.

Technology has moved on since the 1930s at an enormous rate, and such oils, which are no longer compatible with modern engines, should now be relegated



to a museum, along with, for example, mechanical typewriters, 'cats-whisker radios', and other 1930s technology.

### OIL PRICES (VALUE FOR MONEY)

Those who are tempted by low prices should be aware that modern high technology oils can actually provide better value for money in that improved fuel economy will result, in addition to vastly improved engine protection, fuel savings alone often outweighing the extra cost of the oil. Also, by complying with the requirements stipulated in the vehicle handbook, it need not be necessarily overly expensive to buy the product suitable for your car.

### DISPOSAL OF USED OIL

Used engine oils can be hazardous to people and the environment. Minimise skin contact and as recommended by the Oil Care Code dispose of all oil waste at your nearest oil recycling bank (ORB) Telephone the Oil Care Hotline - freephone 0800 663366 to obtain details of your nearest ORB. The Oil Care Code is supported by the Environment Agency, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Northern Ireland's Environment and Heritage Service.

*This leaflet has been produced and distributed by the British Lubricants Federation, the trade association representing the British Lubricants Industry.*

# Lubrication

Automotive  
Engine  
Oils  
Fact Sheet

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