

Wheels: Curt of Xenia writes that the temperature indicator (gauge on the dash) reads hotter than normal after the water pump and timing belt were replaced on his 1986 Toyota Camry. Curt states that the engine runs okay, but is concerned that it may overheat with the hot summer months approaching. Do you have any suggestions?

Halderman: Any problem with the cooling system should be corrected as soon as possible to avoid future problems. Your letter indicated that the temperature gauge read in the normal range until the timing belt and water pump were replaced. This seems to indicate to me that there may be an air pocket in the cooling system. This is a common occurrence and is caused by air getting into the upper sections of the cooling system and then being trapped when fresh coolant is installed after the water pump replacement. Many vehicles are equipped with an air bleeder valve that allows the air to escape as the cooling system is being filled. It is often necessary to raise the front of the vehicle so that the trapped air can rise through the system and escape. Ask the service technician to bleed the system again. It is often necessary to bleed the system several times before all of the air is expelled. I have had good success by loosening the radiator cap when the engine is cold, then driving the vehicle until it reaches operating temperature. This procedure often allows the trapped air to escape around the radiator cap. After driving, I stop the engine and check the coolant level and add coolant (antifreeze and water mixed 50/50) and then tighten the radiator cap and again drive the vehicle checking for proper operation of the temperature gauge and heater.

