

Wheels: Mike writes with a vibration problem on his Escort. “I have a problem that is really strange. I have taken the 1993 Escort wagon to several mechanics including those at the dealership where I bought it several years ago and they keep telling me that it has something to do with the spark plug wires. I have probably replaced them five times in the past five years or so and to no avail. I think that my problem is in the transaxle mountings but I do not know exactly how to check this out on my own and would like some advice. When I start the car and leave it running in the driveway or in a parking lot, it runs fine and smooth. However, if I bring the car to a halt for a red light where I have to sit stopped and with the car in “drive” it starts to vibrate. The vibration increased and increases until it almost seems ready to tear the engine out of the car. A long time ago I found that if I shift the car to “neutral” the shimmy and vibration go away. So, for years now, I have just done that. It only occurs with the car in “drive” and when the brakes are on. If I stop for just a few minutes and then go on, the vibration starts up and then “flat-lines” as I take the brakes off.

I would like some input before I go out there in desperation and get under a running car.”

Halderman: Your vibration could be the transaxle or engine mounts. Here is what I think may be happening. I am assuming that the car runs OK down the road and does not miss during acceleration. If it misses during acceleration, then spark plug wires or the ignition coil are the likely cause. The mounts are located on the noids of the drivetrain and these are locations selected by the engineers that are best to prevent vibration. All four-cylinder engines vibrate and even expensive vehicles with four-cylinder engines have a problem with a vibration at idle in drive. You may be able to increase the idle speed to correct the vibration. I have seen a change of just 20 RPM make all the difference in the world.

The rubber engine oil/ or transaxle mounts could also be collapsed. This is another very common problem. When the mounts collapse or sag, the engine is now located in another position and is no longer located at the noids of lowest vibration. Carefully inspect the rubber mounts. If there is an oil leak above a mount, the oil can cause the rubber to become soft and collapse the mount. I would suggest that the oil leak be repaired before mounts are replaced.

