

Wheels: Bob writes, “The last time I made a decision to change transmission fluid in my cars, I did so in my garage and it was a mess. I was thinking about doing it again until I saw a local automotive tire chain advertise a complete transmission flush for only \$69.99 for most cars and truck. However, parts were extra according to the ad. I thought this was a good deal and took my 2002 Grand Marques to the garage near my home. Just so I would not get any surprises, I asked the manager if he anticipated my car needing any parts. I was told the only part that was needed was a special additive which would be required since my car was a Ford product. This additive, the size of a pint bottle, cost \$19.99. I was told that I could not get this from auto part stores as this was a specialty item. As far as he knew, only a Ford dealer stocked this product and without it my car would shake. The best I can figure out is that the additive converted the Dexron to a Mercon. Any comments would be appreciated.

Halderman: Good question. It used to be very simple to change automatic transmission fluid because there were only two type of fluid in the past: friction-modified, such as Dexron, and non-friction modified, such as Type F used in many older Fords and some older imports. Today, there are numerous types and specifications with another entire classification of fluids referred to as highly-friction-modified fluids. While it is possible to add a bottle of additive to turn a friction-modified fluid, such as Dexron, into a highly-friction-modified fluid, such as Mercon, most experts recommend that the designated fluid be used for best overall performance. The major disadvantage of using the designated fluid is cost. Most of the highly-friction-modified automatic transmission fluids (ATF) are mostly synthetic and therefore, are expensive. What would I recommend? I recommend that the specified fluid be used whenever replacing or topping off any automotive fluid. Also, be sure to check the latest specifications because often newer fluids are recommended for older vehicles and supercedes the original fluid specification. For example, Mercon V may not have been the recommended fluid at the time the vehicle was purchased but it is now the recommended fluid.

