

Wheels: An e-mail from Vaughn says, “I’m a long time hot rodder and mechanic and just purchased a 2002 beetle for my wife. In my initial service of changing oil, checking brakes, etc., I would like to check the automatic transmission and differential fluid levels. I have been told a scan tool is needed. Please recommend a procedure for the home mechanic to check these levels.”

Halderman: Many vehicle manufacturers are eliminating the dipstick used to check the level of the transmission fluid. This was done for several reasons, including:

1. This prevents the possibility of dirt getting into the transmission. When a dipstick is removed, dirt or moisture around the area can drop into the transmission where it can cause severe damage.
2. The level may or may not be low, depending on the temperature of the fluid. As a result, fluid could be added when in fact it is not needed and result in the transmission being overfilled. If the fluid is overfilled, the pump inside the transmission will cause the fluid to become filled with air (aerated), which can cause shifting problems, as well as increased wear to internal parts.
3. The incorrect fluid could be added. There are many different types of fluids used in automatic transmissions today.

Therefore, I would recommend that a scan tool be used to check the level of the transmission during routine service for best results and peace of mind.

