

Wheels: Raoul from Virginia writes by e-mail, “I decided to be a real man for once in my life and do maintenance myself. I bought a five-gallon bucket of oil and changed all of the fluids. I must have hooked something up backwards because the car won’t start. Also, oil is shooting out of the windshield washer. Is that normal?”

Halderman: No, this is not normal. Apparently, you added engine oil to the windshield washer reservoir and other locations, which do not use engine oil. Why does the engine not start? Adding too much oil to the crankcase can cause the engine to not crank fast enough to start. Please see a professional service technician as you could have done harm to many systems if engine oil was used to fill all fluids. For example, seals that can be used with windshield washer fluid are not compatible for oil and therefore, these seals will fail and leaks will occur.

Wheels: What would a professional do to help correct this mistake of using engine oil to fill all of the fluids?

Halderman: All of the fluids would have to be drained, the seals replaced, if not compatible with engine oil. Then all of the systems that did not use engine oil will need to be thoroughly cleaned. The correct fluid will then be added and all air removed from the systems. If oil had been added to the master brake cylinder, the entire brake system would require overhaul or replacement. This alone could cost thousands of dollars.

I do understand that paying for routine maintenance and common repairs is expensive, however, having a professional perform the service using the factory recommended lubricants and procedures is often less costly in the long run.

