

How to Safely Use Automotive Jumper Cables

A dead car battery can happen to anyone. Knowing how to properly use jumper cables can help get your vehicle running again, but connecting the cables incorrectly can damage electrical components, create sparks, or cause serious injury.

Safety First

Before connecting jumper cables, inspect both batteries for cracks, leaks, swelling, severe corrosion, or other visible damage. **Never attempt to jump-start a damaged or frozen battery.**

Wear safety glasses and gloves whenever possible. Keep cigarettes, flames, and other ignition sources away from the batteries. Make sure both vehicles are turned **OFF**, placed in **Park or Neutral**, and have their parking brakes applied.

The vehicles should be close enough for the jumper cables to reach, but they should **not touch each other**.

Always verify the battery terminals before connecting anything:

Positive = + (RED)

Negative = - (BLACK)

How to Connect Jumper Cables

Follow this order carefully:

Step 1 - RED to the Dead Battery (+)

Connect one RED clamp to the positive (+) terminal of the dead battery.

Step 2 - RED to the Good Battery (+)

Connect the other RED clamp to the positive (+) terminal of the good battery.

Step 3 - BLACK to the Good Battery (-)

Connect one BLACK clamp to the negative (-) terminal of the good battery.

Step 4 - BLACK to Ground

Connect the remaining BLACK clamp to a solid, unpainted metal engine or chassis ground on the vehicle with the dead battery, away from the battery itself. Follow the vehicle manufacturer's specified jump-start grounding point when available.

Remember:

RED = Positive (+)

BLACK = Negative (-)

Never allow the jumper cable clamps to touch each other while connected to a battery.

Start the Vehicles

Start the vehicle with the good battery and allow it to run briefly. Then attempt to start the vehicle with the dead battery.

If the vehicle does not start after a few reasonable attempts, stop. The problem may involve more than a discharged battery, such as a failed battery, starter, alternator, poor connection, or another electrical problem.

Removing the Jumper Cables

Once the disabled vehicle is running, remove the cables in the **reverse order**:

1. **BLACK clamp from the previously disabled vehicle's ground point**
2. **BLACK clamp from the good battery**
3. **RED clamp from the good battery**
4. **RED clamp from the previously disabled battery**

Keep the clamps separated while removing them.

Important Warning

NEVER reverse the polarity of jumper cables.

Connecting positive (+) to negative (-) incorrectly can create heavy sparks and potentially damage batteries, fuses, computers, charging systems, and other sensitive electronics.

Some modern, hybrid, electric, luxury, and specialty vehicles have specific jump-start procedures or designated terminals. **Always check the vehicle owner's manual before jump-starting.**

A few extra seconds spent checking your connections can prevent an expensive mistake.

Safety First — Your Life Is More Important!

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Educational Purposes Only: This guide provides general automotive educational information. Vehicle designs and manufacturer procedures vary. Always follow the service information and safety procedures specified for your particular vehicle.