

Condenser Test

Although there is equipment made specifically for testing condensers, there is a basic test that can be performed using an analog (needle type) ohm meter.

Be sure you perform this test on something non-metal, such as a wooden bench or even a sheet of plywood or a 2x6 board.

1. Remove the condenser from the stator plate and place on the above mentioned surface. There will be the metal jacket condenser and a lead wire coming from the top. The lead wire is considered the HOT (or positive) and the metal jacket is considered the COMMON (or negative). Start by discharging the condenser by touching the HOT lead wire to the COMMON metal jacket.
2. Turn on the meter to the ohms position. Be sure the meter leads are connected correctly to test ohms and set the resistance range to the highest available setting if allowed. Connect the meter test leads together and zero the meter's needle.
3. Hold the meter's red test lead to the condenser HOT lead wire and hold completely still and firm. Now place the meter's black test lead to the condensers COMMON metal jacket, again holding is completely still and firm. You should see the meter's needle jump slightly to the right or towards the zero ohms, and then the needle should increase slightly back to the left towards high resistance. Hold the leads firmly in place for at least 20 seconds as this places a charge into the condenser. If the needle does not move towards higher resistance the condenser is leaking energy and is bad.

Once the condenser is charged, now reverse the leads (placing the meter's black lead onto the condenser's HOT lead and the meter's red lead onto the condenser's COMMON metal jacket) and watch the meter as the connection is made. As soon as the last lead makes contact with the condenser the meter's needle should jump towards the right (zero ohms) again as this discharges the condenser. Keep holding the connections and the condenser should recharge and you should see the needle increase resistance and move back to the left.

4. If you see the meter's needle move as indicated above the condenser is considered good. If the needle did not move as described, the condenser is bad and should be replaced or the points and condenser be replaced with an electronic ignition.

SPECIAL NOTE: Condensers are known to absorb moisture and over time will destroy the condenser, especially if not being used. I have lots of customers who dig out an old Kitty Cat snowmobile after it's been stored in the rafters of a garage or a storage shed for many years and they can't figure out why it lost spark while just being stored. Many times it's because the Kitty Cat was stored in a non-climate controlled area and subjected to periodic moisture and the condenser is now bad. In this case if you test and find this to be true, replace the points and condenser with the Electronic Ignition we sell at Olson Brothers Distributing.