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## Why is battery not holding charge

Maintenance/Repairs I've been having a lot of trouble with my 2001 Hyundai Elantra. I have had it in and out of the shop and now, it's just sitting until I can afford to fix the next set of issues. The current problem here is that my car will start with a jump but won't hold a charge. I was told there's a miscommunication between the alternator & battery. No codes can be read so, I have no idea what the issue is and at this point, I don't even trust the mechanics around me. We thought it was an issue with the alternator so, I replaced that but something is still draining it and everyone tells me they can't do anything without actually looking at it. Is there anything I can check or do to save some money? Because at this point, I can't afford to have it towed and have it in the shop again. You could put in a new battery and then diagnose the current drain with a VOM. Without a functional battery, you can't really figure it out. I Like We've tried putting in another battery and it did the same thing to that one so, we know it's not the battery. Also, thanks for replying back so quickly! OK so something is draining the battery. This is not necessarily an easy thing to pin point but it starts with hooking up a test light or meter and pulling fuses to see if that changes the drain. If you are lucky enough to find a fuse that kills the drain, then you can look at what is malfunctioning in that circuit. Prime suspects are glove box or trunk lights that don't shut off but I have had the door handle switch that turns the interior lights on and the electronic level control module. In both cases just found it by accident since it was intermittent. So really, yeah someone that knows something really needs to start doing the diagnosis. I Like No, I don't believe so. Thanks for the article, I'll check it out! An alternator can't be relied on to recharge a severely discharged battery. What does work is a battery charger, preferably one that can be set to charge slowly overnight and then cut back to a trickle charge. If your battery has removable caps, you can measure the state of charge (specific gravity) in each cell before and after a charge. The tool, like a baster, sucks some battery acid into a transparent compartment. Inside a float with a scale, or floating balls, tell you the SG. That tells you if each cell can take a charge. If you measure later and the SG has gone down, that is a cell that is not holding a charge. I Like What I'm trying to convey is that without a charged battery in the car, you can't diagnose this. I Like The battery is charging right now but what I'm saying is, we have charged the battery and jumped it and the charge will only last for about a minute or so and cut off. The battery won't hold the charge. And I was told it is because of a miscommunication between the battery & alternator. But I'm trying to understand what could be causing that miscommunication. Not sure. Some batteries cannot hold a charge. If you remove the battery to charge it, you are decomplicating the situation. See if it takes and holds a charge, without any connection to the car. (You may have to reset radio memory, etc. Check owners manual about that. In some cars it is a big hassle to remove and install a battery unless you have special equipment, so I don't want to suggest some step that might add to the mysteries.) I Like You are aware that your alternator can fail and become a big giant hole into which electrons will flow... Yes? Do this quick test... unhook the hot lead from the alternator and then hook up your charged battery. Be sure the hot lead cannot or will not ground itself as it is a direct connection to the positive terminal...but easy to do just for a quick test. If the car runs and functions normally and the battery does not go dead you just found the problem. A digital volt meter is extremely helpful if not mandatory for most of the tests I could also tell you to perform...but lets start with the easiest and quickest test... Unhook the alternator lead. In instances where the alternator is the culprit the alternator will be warm to hot to the touch on a cold engine and with a charged battery...big clue there. The alternator is brand new. I thought that was the issue so, I already had it replaced. We checked it with a volt meter too and it was at a 16. If the battery won't hold a charge, it is shot. period. That doesn't mean there aren't other electrical problems, though. We have tested another battery and it did the same thing Tested it on its own or installed in the car? A good battery will not not discharge in a minute or so. How are you testing the battery? Check the voltage at the battery terminals with the engine running after being started with a jump. If it's at least 14 volts, there is no "miscommunication". I Like bing: OK so something is draining the battery. That's apparently the case even now. I Like The battery has been checked several times. It had like no voltage. No power and this was after being charged and after being jumped. So that is why I was told it's a miscommunication between the alternator & battery. I even charged it for hours today and it was completely drained as soon as I tried starting it. next page - As important as the engine is to your vehicle, it's the battery that routes voltage to the starter, which turns over the engine. The battery also supplies electricity to power all the lights, the audio and navigation systems, computers and various electrical-dependent parts. On occasion, a car battery won't hold a charge. If that happens, your vehicle won't go anywhere. Here's how to diagnose and fix the problem so you're never left stranded.1. Check the HeadlightsTo confirm that the car battery won't hold a charge, you need to rule out other possible problems first. Begin by turning on the headlights. If they provide full brightness, then the problem isn't with the car battery. Instead, you likely have a wiring issue or a faulty starter. On the other hand, if the lights are not as bright as normal, then the car battery is the issue.2. Attach a VoltmeterYou're now ready to use a voltmeter to gauge how much "juice" your battery has. Attach the red lead to the positive terminal and the black lead to the negative terminal. If the voltmeter reads between 12.65 volts and 12.77 volts, then the battery is fully charged. Anything less than a full charge means you need to continue to look for an answer.3. Consider the BatteryOne significant reason why a car battery won't hold a charge is age. Obvious signs that your battery is too old and worn out include corrosion and cracking. If it's at least four years old, then it should probably be replaced. For younger batteries, a car that isn't started for days or weeks can also lose its charge. Move on to the next step for the solution to this problem.4. Give It a ChargeIf you have a young battery, you can ensure it has a sufficient charge by keeping it connected to a battery maintainer, also known as a battery tender, when parked overnight. With the hood up, you first connect the battery maintainer to a household outlet, then connect the red (positive) followed by the black (negative) connectors to the respective battery post. The maintainer unit itself can sit on any flat surface, such as the leading edge of the car in front of the fan.With this battery maintainer, you have a choice of three modes for charging: Soft start is ideal for severely depleted batteries; recondition is best for distressed batteries; and enhanced is for long-term storage, such as for your classic car or occasionally used off-road vehicle. Once connected to a household outlet and to the car battery, the maintainer turns on automatically and continues to provide electricity as long as necessary.As long as other possible electrical problems have been ruled out, the battery maintainer should do its job. When constantly connected, it's the perfect solution for parked vehicles that are seldom driven and have a battery that won't hold a charge.Check out all of the batteries available on NAPA Online or trust one of our 17,000 NAPA AutoCare locations for routine maintenance and repairs. For more information on car battery issues, chat with a knowledgeable expert at your local NAPA AUTO PARTS store.Photo courtesy of Flickr. So you charge your battery up, but before you know it the unit is flat again. Its a common scenario, but the causes are varied. In this article we'll go through what can cause the issue and how to fix it. Parasitic electrical drains One of the most frequent reasons batteries run flat quickly is that there is some drain occurring which is not immediately obvious. A well known one in vehicles is the faulty interior light which does not switch off when the door is closed. Unnoticed it gradually draws energy making the battery look like the guilty party when it is anything but. Certain apps on laptops and smartphones can keep features running even when the device is left on standby. A worn out button on a remote control can get stuck down. The list of possibilities is long, but before beginning the hunt check that this is actually the cause. First try fully charging the battery, removing it from the device and then testing it after whatever time period it usually runs flat. If the battery remains fully operational it is a parasitic electrical drain somewhere that needs to be rooted out. In larger appliances a multi-meter can help you track down the circuit which is drawing power from the battery. In laptops and similar devices try removing or disabling all the apps and then re-enabling them one by one until the fault re-occurs. Is it actually charging? Connecting your battery to a charger doesn't mean it is charging. Some electrical devices such as smartphones and laptops have on screen indicators that confirm the battery is receiving a charge but many household and power tool batteries and those in vehicles are charged in isolation with only a possible indicator light on the charger to confirm charging is taking place or complete. You can check chargers where the battery terminals are exposed during charging by connecting a voltmeter between the two. When charging the voltage should be slightly greater than the stated voltage of the battery. However for chargers which hide the terminals (such as those for cameras and power tools) the only way to confirm the charger is working correctly is to try a second one. If you find that it is your charger that is faulty you might be able to find a replacement in our selection of battery chargers. In vehicles specifically, a battery might not have time recharge after starting the engine if you make regular short trips or have an excessive number of electrical devices such as large sound systems operating. Here it will seem like the battery isn't holding its charge, but in reality it is never really being fully recharged and you will need to plug it in to a wall charger from time to time to get it back up to a full state of charge. Acid stratification in lead acid batteries Lead acid vehicle batteries that are never fully recharged can also suffer from acid stratification. This is where the acidic part of the electrolyte becomes concentrated at the bottom of the battery which causes two issues. Firstly it means there is less acid in direct contact with the plates which makes it less effective in doing its job and secondly the more watery electrolyte at the top promotes corrosion of the plates reducing their future abilities even if the battery is fully recharged. Acid stratification is worth a particular mention because when it occurs a battery can often have the same voltage as a fully charged battery giving the appearance that it is fully charged when it is anything but. This voltage issue can also lead some chargers to believe the unit requires no charge and so they will not operate. The wrong charger Different battery types charge in different ways and so need specific chargers. Most chargers pass a current through a battery until the battery reports a certain voltage has been achieved, but lithium-ion units are a good example of an exception to this rule - their voltage is fairly constant except when the battery is in a very low state of charge. As such a lithium-ion charger must monitor current and voltage and change the charge at various points. Trying to charge a lithium-ion battery with a charger for a different chemistry type can result in the charger reporting it has done its job when the battery is still close to empty, not to mention possible damage to the battery from passing the wrong current through it. Changes in operating temperature Batteries don't like the cold, it reduces the amount of power they can deliver. This is why a car battery will work on a balmy autumn day, but fail the next morning when the weather has turned frosty. It is why you can jump start a vehicle and drive round town all day (stopping and starting with no issues as the engine has warmed up and so needs less power to start each time), but find the battery once again needs a jump start the next day. All batteries - smart phone, laptop, power sports, two way radio and power tool batteries included - have the same issue. They run flat faster in the cold, not because they can't hold their charge, but because the chemical reaction inside the battery is less efficient at lower temperatures reducing the time they can operate a device. A badly constructed battery bank Any device which needs two or more batteries to operate is being powered by a battery bank. Mixing amp hour (or milli amp hour) and/or voltages in a battery bank without the correct charging and discharging circuitry can cause damage to the batteries that will cause them to run flat faster than they should. This issue is not limited to the electronic enthusiast building complex power sources. Batteries that have been charged and discharged a number of times have different capacities to new units with identical ratings, even when they are from the same manufacturer and brand so mixing new and old can reduce the ability of the battery bank to hold its charge. Batteries from different manufacturers, but rated the same are never actually identical causing the same issue. As such it is always recommended that when a device has more than one battery they are all replaced at the same time with batteries of the same capacity from the same manufacturer, ideally produced at the same time. For more detail on battery bank issues see Connecting batteries in series and Connecting batteries in parallel. The battery has reached the end of its life While there are numerous reasons why rechargeable batteries might not be holding their charge, the bottom line is they don't last forever, even in ideal environments. With every charge and discharge internal chemical build ups reduce their ability to charge making their discharge times shorter and shorter. Batteries left for in a very low state of charge for long periods of time can also experience the same changes, so although they can report being 'charged', the active materials inside and available to power devices are limited. (see Why do rechargeable batteries die for a full explanation on this process). At this point there is no option but to replace the unit.







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