

SMALL ENGINE MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

Small engine maintenance is necessary for maximizing your equipment investment. For smooth operation through all four seasons, regular tune-ups are required. The best information on how to maintain an engine will be listed in the owner's manual. However, the following guidelines can act as general rules for engine maintenance scheduling.

✓ CHECK AND CHANGE THE OIL AND FILTER.

Change the oil after the first ten hours of use, and after every 50 to 100 hours of use thereafter. If the engine is running under a heavy load, or if the weather is hot, the oil should be changed every twenty-five hours. The oil filter should be replaced at every oil change. As a minimum, the oil and filter should be changed at least once a season. Finally, as oil is the lifeblood of an engine, it is best to check its level and quality after every five hours of use.

✓ REPLACE THE SPARK PLUGS.

Small engines vary on how frequently they require spark plug replacement. Briggs and Stratton recommends replacing spark plugs every 100 hours, while Honda small engines require new plugs every 300 hours. However, both manufacturers agree on the need to replace spark plugs at least once per year.

✓ REPLACE THE IN-LINE FUEL FILTER.

Replace the filter every 100 hours or once per season. Briggs and Stratton also recommends cleaning the cooling system and decarbonizing the cylinder head every 100 hours.

✓ ADJUST THE IDLE SPEED.

Make the adjustment every year, or after every 300 hours of use.

✓ CHECK AND ADJUST THE VALVE CLEARANCE.

Perform this task on a consistent schedule, annually or after every 300 hours.

✓ CLEAN THE COMBUSTION CHAMBER.

Clean the chamber after every 1,000 hours of use.

✓ REPLACE THE AIR CLEANER.

Replace on a schedule according to type. Foam air cleaners should be replaced every twenty-five hours, or once per season. Paper cartridges without foam pre-cleaners should be replaced on the same schedule. However, paper cartridges with foam pre-cleaners only require replacement every 100 hours (or once per season) depending on use.

✓ CHECK THE FUEL LINE.

Perform a checkup every two years, and replace if needed.

To optimize performance, it is best to check the oil and remove debris around the muffler after every use of a small engine.

Even new mechanics should be able to check and change the oil and filter. Spark plugs are also fairly easy to replace. However, it is best to leave other tasks—such as cleaning the combustion chamber and adjusting valve clearance—to engine specialists.

Commercial operations should formalize engine maintenance by keeping detailed operation hour logs.

Without steady maintenance, engine performance will be limited. More importantly, many manufacturers' warranties are invalidated by failure to follow consistent maintenance standards. It is always in the owner's best interest to consistently service engines, either in-house or through a small engine mechanic.

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