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Has your vehicleâ€™s alternator failed? Are you absolutely certain that it isnâ€™t your battery or starter? Determining which part has failed is essential toward avoiding unnecessarily replacing something that hasnâ€™t failed, like your battery. Letâ€™s take a look at some steps you can take to determine that your alternator, in fact, has bit the dust.

If you own an alternator testing machine, you can test to see whether your carâ€™s alternator is charging correctly. For most people this isnâ€™t practical as few motorists own such an expensive piece of equipment. For everyone else, there is a practical way for you to easily check to see if your alternator is working properly:

Connect a volt meter to your car's battery

Start your car

Observe the voltage output on the volt meter so that you can make an accurate determination.

If there is an increase in voltage when you start your car, then your alternator is more than likely working just fine. Likely, you battery is the culprit; check the battery itself and the connections to make a final determination.

If there is no increase in voltage, you are likely looking at having to replace your alternator.

The next step, of course, is to determine whether you will replace the alternator yourself or have someone else do the job. Some things to keep in mind as you weigh your options include:

If you trust your vehicle to a mechanic, what will the total cost of the work be including the part and labor? Is there a guarantee?

If you decide to do the work yourself, do you have all the tools on hand to get the work done? Do you own a repair manual? Do you want to purchase a new alternator or will a remanufactured unit suffice?

Your choices today are much greater than they were ten years ago, before internet shopping became a strong factor in reigning in high auto parts prices. Several online wholesalers, including the Auto Parts Warehouse, are in business to sell auto parts directly to you. Costs are generally much lower than local retail establishments and parts are from well known manufacturers, names you can trust in the business.

Doing the work yourself can save you time and money as well as give to you a sense of accomplishment. With a trusty repair manual at your side you can replace your vehicleâ€™s alternator quickly and accurately.

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