Article Side

Nitro RC Cars and Nitro RC Airplanes: are they allowed to use the same nitro fuel?

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RC glow engine systems use nitro fuel. This is a methanol-based fuel that has nitro methane and oil added into the mix. The nitro methane in the fuel used by most nitro RC cars are typically about 20%, but could go in the range of 10% to 40%; sometimes, this could even go higher. There are several discussions as to whether the nitro fuel used in nitro RC cars is suitable for use with its airplane counterpart. The major difference in the nitro fuel used by both all lies in the percentage of the nitro methane.

The oil in the RC fuel is there to reduce friction and help the RC engine cool itself. Nitro fuel usually contains castor oil, synthetic oil, or sometimes a mix of both.Castor oil is able to break down at high temperatures and produce a lubricating film while synthetic oil lubricates at low temperature and burns off at high temperature. Nitro RC cars run hotter and have less efficient cooling systems than the nitro RC airplane, which is why the nitro fuel for nitro RC cars uses castor oil more than the synthetic oil.

The percentage of oil used in the nitro RC cars and the nitro RC airplane ranges from 8% to 25%. There is currently a debate going on about whether an RC aircraft needs a higher percentage of oil in its nitro fuel because it runs at full throttle during most of its flight than a nitro RC car that is only able to run at full throttle for short periods of time. However, these are all still debatable.

While it is true that the normal percentage of nitro in nitro fuel is at 10% to 40%, there are nitro fuels available with as much as 60% or as low as 0% nitro. Most of the nitro RC cars use the 10% to 40% nitro blend for optimum runs, while its airplane counterpart uses only 5% to 10%. There are also some nitro RC cars and nitro RC airplane engines that are able to run on regular gasoline when mixed with motor oil, diesel fuel, propane, or sometimes even kerosene. However, these engines are those endowed with spark plugs instead of glow plugs. Note too that these types of engines are not what are typically sold in the market.

The best fuel to start out when running nitro RC cars of nitro RC airplane is the mixture that is recommended by the manufacturers. Donâ€™t start on experimenting on various nitro blends for your RC car and RC airplaneâ€™s fuel until you have sufficient familiarity with how your RC engine works. You will then be able to understand the effects of different nitro blends with the performance of your RC car and nitro RC airplane and start experimenting to find the mix that is best suited to your RC engine. But for now, stick with the manufacturerâ€™s choice in nitro fuel blends.

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