

# The engine

The engine is the heart of your car. It is a complex machine built to convert heat from burning gas into the force that turns the road wheels.

The chain of reactions which achieves that objective is set in motion by a spark, which ignites a mixture of petrol vapour and compressed air inside a momentarily sealed cylinder and causes it to burn rapidly. That is why the machine is called an internal combustion engine. As the mixture burns it expands, providing power to drive the car.

To withstand its heavy workload, the engine must be a robust structure. It consists of two basic parts: the lower, heavier section is the cylinder block, a casing for the engine's main moving parts; the detachable upper cover is the cylinder head.

The cylinder head contains valve-controlled passages through which the air and fuel mixture enters the cylin-

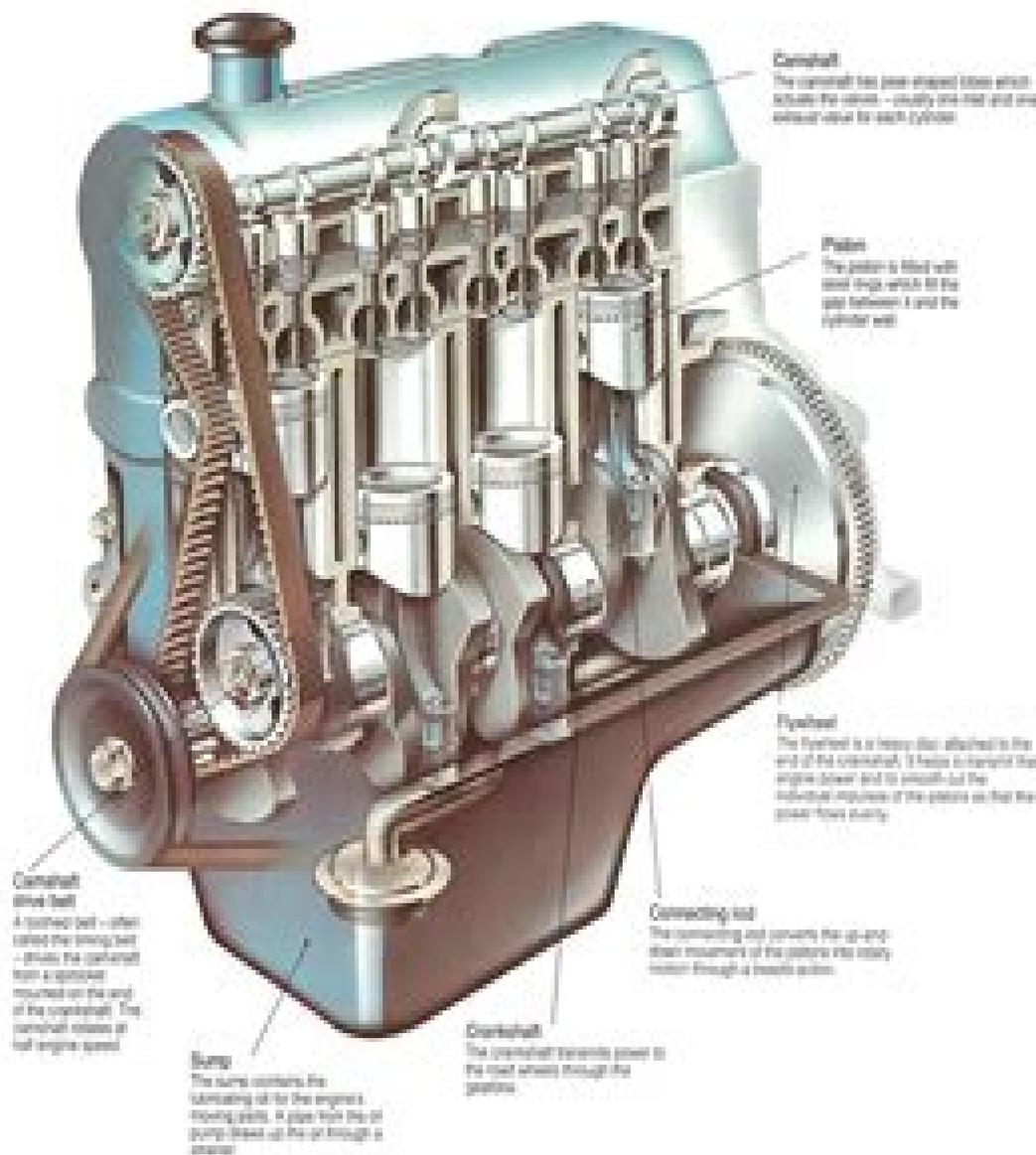
ders, and others through which the gases produced by their combustion are expelled.

The block houses the crankshaft, which converts the reciprocating motion of the pistons into rotary motion at the crankshaft. Often the block also houses the camshaft, which operates mechanisms that open and close the valves in the cylinder head. Sometimes the camshaft is in the head or mounted above it (as illustrated).

The cylinders are cast into the block, so are mountings for auxiliary equipment such as a filter for the oil which lubricates the engine, and a pump for the fuel. An oil reservoir, called the sump, is fitted underneath the crankcase.

Both block and head are usually made of cast iron. But sometimes aluminium is chosen for the head, because it is lighter and dissipates heat more efficiently.

The parts of an overhead-camshaft engine



**Camshaft**  
The camshaft has pear-shaped lobes which operate the valves - usually one for the inlet and one for the outlet to each cylinder

**Piston**  
The piston is fitted with steel rings which fit the gaps between it and the cylinder wall

**Flywheel**  
The flywheel is a heavy disc attached to the end of the crankshaft. It helps to smooth the engine's power and to smooth out the rotational impulses of the pistons so that the driver feels steady

**Connecting rod**  
The connecting rod converts the up-and-down movement of the pistons into rotary motion through a thrust collar

**Crankshaft**  
The crankshaft transmits power to the road wheels through the gearbox

**Sump**  
The sump contains the lubricating oil for the engine's moving parts. A pipe from the oil pump draws up the oil through a strainer

**Camshaft drive belt**  
A rubbered belt - often called the timing belt - drives the camshaft from a sprocket mounted on the end of the crankshaft. The camshaft opens or falls engine valves

## Different engine layouts

The simplest and most common type of engine compresses four vertical cylinders close together in a row. This is known as an in-line engine. Cars with capacities exceeding 2,000cc often have six-cylinders in line.

The more compact V-engine is found in some cars, especially vehicles with eight or 12 cylinders, and also some with six.

cylinders. Here the cylinders are arranged opposite each other at an angle of up to 90 degrees.

Some engines have horizontally opposed cylinders. They get an extension of the in-engine, the angle having been widened to 180 degrees. The advantage lies in saving height and also in certain aspects of balance.



# How Stuff Works Auto Engine

**Oliver H. U. Heathcote**



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