Mercedes W123 Basic Battery and Alternator Test Technique

Your W123 depends on a strong battery to get started, and once started your electrical system needs a well functioning alternator to re-charge the battery and to operate the lights, radio, etc. Testing it can help narrow down any problems.

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INTRODUCTION

When your car won't start the first place to check is the battery. Your car needs a solid 12 volts to start properly.

If the car will start after you charge up your battery, but not the next time you drive, your alternator may not be properly re-charging it. Same for if your lights go dim while driving, or your radio acts up, etc.

It's very easy to do some basic testing to see if your battery and/or alternator are working properly. This can help you begin to narrow down your problem.

TOOLS:

- Multimeter (1)

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Step 1 — Mercedes W123 Basic Battery and Alternator Test Technique

- Open the hood.
- Turn on your multimeter. Set it to the setting shown, which is for measuring 20 volts and under.

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Step 2

- Connect the tester leads on your meter to the terminals on your battery. The red lead goes on the positive (+) terminal on your battery, and the black lead goes on the negative (-) terminal.

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Step 3

- Check your gauge. A healthy battery should read about 12.5 volts when the car is off. This battery is only a few weeks old and is testing well as expected.
- If the battery is reading lower, especially if it's reading lower than 12 volts, consider taking it to an auto store for charge and load testing.
- Disconnect the meter from the battery.

Step 4

- Start the car.
- Reconnect your leads to the battery as shown in step 2.
- The meter will now show the volts being produced by the alternator, via the battery. This is the charging voltage of the system.
- A healthy alternator generally will produce 14+ volts. Anything under and the alternator should be tested further. Most automotive stores will test the alternator further for free.

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When you've finished testing if everything looks good and you're still having electrical issues you'll need to diagnose further.

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