There are many reasons you might need to hotwire a car, and there are different ways to do it for different cars. Here are some procedures to get the job done.

How To Hotwire A Car In An Emergency

Before we get started, a quick tip, do not try to hotwire a newer car, it’s virtually impossible for the average car DIY person. If you lose your keys or have some type of an emergency and you need to hotwire a new car, forget about it. You need new key fobs, new computer components, and the car would have to be [reprogrammed by a professional](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/esp-lights/) at the correct dealership.

So obviously the smart thing to do here is to keep extra sets of keys around, that’s even a good idea with cars built before the mid-’90s that you can hotwire without a lot of trouble and a little bit of knowledge. Keep a set at home, at work, in your locker at the gym, or someone’s house you visit a lot (a family member, a best friend, a girlfriend) just make sure you know them and trust them.

But no matter how many precautions you take, like anything it can happen. And if you have a car that was built in the mid-’90s or earlier, you do have some options. But I would not break your steering column apart in a hot wiring car emergency if you don’t know what you’re doing and don’t have some general tools, you could make your problem worse. After reading this article, you should have a good idea if this is a task you can take on or not.

### Basic Tools You’ll Need:

* drill and drill bit (roughly ⅜ inch)
* flat head screwdriver, phillips head, and possibly some torque head screwdrivers
* x-acto knife, razor blade, or wire strippers/cutters - whatever you prefer to use to get insulation off of wires
* electrical tape
* jumper cables
* pulley extractor for the steering wheel (maybe)
* random or old spare wire that is lying around in the garage or in your junk draw or a set of clip leads

In these three examples that I will talk about, depending on the way you chose to hotwire your car, you won’t need an assortment of all of these tools. And depending on what curveballs your car throws at you during the process, you might need more. This will depend on the year, make, and model of your car so be prepared.

## **Jumping Wires In Your Steering Wheel Column**

This is kind of a tedious task, but not super hard. First, you have to find out everything that you have to remove to get to your ignition system’s wiring harness in the steering wheel column. This will include either the kick panel, steering wheel column cover, the steering wheel, or maybe all three, and maybe even more.

Which components you have to remove will depend on what kind of car you’re working on. This will also determine what kind of tools you’ll need to remove the components. Sometimes you get lucky and you can just snap the components off with a flathead screwdriver. But be careful, you want to [hotwire your car without damaging](https://mechanicbase.com/electric/how-to-hotwire-a-car/) the removable parts or your parts won’t go back together correctly, and that will end up costing you more money.

Once you have determined what needs to come off to expose the ignition system wiring bundle, you can remove them with the “**PROPER TOOLS”**. When you get the proper covers off, you will come across three sets of wiring bundles. One set will veer off to the right and the other set will veer off to the left. These wiring bundles operate your lights, windshield wipers, cruise control, and other accessories like that. The wiring bundle that goes straight up the steering column is the one that you’ll be working on.

What you want to find in this wiring bundle is the battery, ignition, and starter wire. To do this you will need to either use a voltage meter, a test light, or find the wiring diagram for the year/make/model of your car. My suggestion is to use your owner’s manual or use that crazy thing called the internet and google your car’s “year/make/model hotwire car wiring diagram.”

**First Method: Jumping Wires**

Essentially what you will be doing is bypassing the switches that connect together when you turn on the key. I will show you two different examples of how you can do this:

1. Locate the battery and ignition wires and cut both wires in half. The closer to your fingers the better. Easy access makes it easier on yourself.
2. Then use the wire cutters to remove the insulation (the rubbery outside of the wire) from the tip of the wires coming up from the firewall.
3. Twist both the battery and the ignition wires together. This should bring on all the bells and whistles you hear when you turn your key on without starting it (radio, heater/a/c, dome light, [ABS lights](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/abs-light/), that annoying ding-ding noise, etc).
4. Once you have established everything is working, you can then take your starter wire and connect all three together and you should get your car’s engine to turn over and start. However, do not tie in the starter cable. Just make contact with the other two wires and then when the car starts, take off the starter wire. If you plan on driving anywhere, make sure to use the electrical tape and tape up the exposed wires. **Warning:** Some sparks might fly when you touch the starter wire to the battery and the ignition wire, but there is nothing to worry about here unless you have been playing with gasoline or something like that.
5. When you want to shut off the engine, just pull the battery and the ignition wire apart from each other.

**Second Method: Jumping Wires**

This how-to hotwire your car step-by-step method involves the same three wires. If you can find the wiring harness connector easily, you can use this method so you don't have to chop the wires apart like in the previous method.

1. Find the wiring harness clip and disconnect by using a flathead screwdriver.
2. Determine which wires go to the battery, ignition, and starter.
3. Chop up two pieces of wire about two inches long (something hanging around the garage or a junk draw) or you can use a set of clip leads. You won’t need a very thick wire for this, in fact, this might not work if the wire is too thick.
4. Tear off the insulation on each end of both wires exposing a small portion of the wire itself on each end.
5. Then where the wires go into the connector from the firewall, on the other side of the connector there will be brass connections where it would plug into the other plastic connector (its mate). Take one of the miscellaneous wires you’ve cut up and place one end in the hole of the connector coming from the firewall that corresponds to the battery wire on the other side. Take the other end of the wire and place it in the hole where the ignition wire leads into. This should start up all your accessories just like above. Next, to complete the circuit and start the car, take the second wire you chopped up and stick it in the starter hole and jump it over to the battery hole. The starter wire does not stay connected once the engine is running, you can disconnect.
6. When you are ready to stop the engine, simply pull the remaining wire out of its holes.

## **How To Hotwire Your Car With A Screwdriver And A Drill**

This is kind of a destructive way to get your car started, and without a doubt will force you to spring for a new Tumble Hole (keyhole), but desperate times call for desperate actions.

1. Get a drill and a drill bit about ⅜ of an inch thick.
2. Use the drill to slowly, but with some power, reem out the keyhole about ¾ of the way in. As you are drilling, make sure to pull out the drill bit a lot and go back in. This is a tough metal, so you will not be able to cream right through it. If your drill bit is getting too hot or smoking too much, you can use Windex or something close to that for cooling and lubrication. There will be several sets of lock pins inside the hole so make sure you get them all broken.
3. Once you are sure all lock pins are broken, you’re ready to use your screwdriver as a key. This works best on older cars like ‘80 style Hondas and Toyotas, etc.

## **Using Jumper Cables**

This method might take a little more investigating while trying to find the correct components. But this is a way to hotwire a car without tools, just a set of jumper cables. You’re still going to use battery, ignition, and starter components - the battery should be easy to find, but you might have to work a little harder to find the other two components. The nice thing about this method is if you have a push-button start for your car or a more sophisticated safety-security system on your car, this is a much more modern way of hot wiring.

1. The first thing you need to do is get a pair of jumper cables and [open up your hood.](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/what-makes-your-car-run-hot/) You want to find your red coil wire and follow it to your coil. When you have found it, clip the cable on to the positive side of the coil, that would be the side the red wire runs to. You might have some trouble finding your way to the coil, not all of them look the same or are installed in the same places (use the Internet or owner’s manual).
2. Now take the opposite side of the jumper cable and place it on the positive side of the battery terminal. Now you should have all of your accessories working (radio, wipers, blinkers, etc.).
3. Next, you want to find your starter solenoid. If you don’t know where it is, just save yourself some time and look in your owner’s manual. It could be attached to your starter, under the hood off to the side by the fenders, under the dash, or some other corky place that will leave you looking for hours. Just pray it’s not in a place that is super hard to get to.
4. Once you have found the starter solenoid, attach one end of the jumper cables to the positive side of the solenoid (a red wire will be connected to it) and make contact with the other end of the cable to the positive side of the battery. This completes the connection that should get the engine started. Just like in the examples above, the starter connection is only to be connected until the engine starts, and to shut the engine down, just disconnect everything. Be prepared to possibly do some makeshift engineering. If the coil, battery, and starter solenoid are far from one another, you might have to get clever.

## **Unlocking The Steering Wheel**

Just because you found a way to get your car started without a key, most likely your car’s steering wheel is probably going to be locked. This is a [problem all of its own](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/2019/02/). You can first try the jerk and pull movement. This is not healthy for your car and or your shoulders. But you can always try to jerk and pull the steering wheel back-and-forth with a lot of force, and you might just be able to break it loose.

The other method is to look inside your owner’s manual and find out what kind of lock mechanism you have on your vehicle’s steering column and where it’s located. Some might be easy to disengage whereas others could be a little more dangerous and need some brute force and special tools. The biggest thing here is to know what you’re doing and try not to damage other parts of your car.

**Warring:** This isn’t always safe for you or your car. You could get shocked or injured during any one of these methods. You could also do damage to the electrical system and other parts of your car. This “how to hotwire your car” tutorial is to help you in a bad situation, if you don’t have to do it, I wouldn’t try it.

**Warring:** This is not a promotion to steal any cars. You could face serious law consequences.

As mentioned above, have a spare set of keys wherever you feel comfortable having them. Even if you’re not in that place when the [unfortunate happens](https://www.cashcarsbuyer.com/statistics-about-scrap-cars/), at least you can give someone a call to get the spare set to you. I don’t think trying to hotwire your car as a beginner in the Walmart parking lot sounds like a lot of fun.