

Simple Stuff Sockets, What's the Point?

By Bob Vitrikas

Now here's a subject I haven't given too much thought to but now I will after reading an article by Kyle Smith in the Jan-Feb issue of the Hagerty Drivers Club magazine. When I need to use a ratchet wrench to remove a bolt I usually reach into my tool box and grab the first socket that is the correct drive size (1/4", 3/8", 1/2") and fits the bolt head, which is usually six sided. What I haven't been doing is looking at the socket to see if it is a 6 or 12-point socket. Here's why we should care.

Compare the socket wall thickness and you will see that the 6-point socket wall is thicker than the 12 point and more importantly, the walls on the 6-point socket are slightly convex curved between the points. That results in more grip, less slippage on the sides of the fastener rather than the points allowing you to apply more force and results in less chance of rounding off the points of the bolt. This has the added benefit of reducing cursing, skinned knuckles and more pain trying to get the #\$\$%^ bolt out. So why even have a 12 point socket? They have the advantage of enabling the bolt to be loosened with half the angular rotation of the socket, handy to have in tight spaces which abound in our LBCs. Keep in mind there are 12-point bolts which require a 12-point socket to remove so don't throw away your 12-point sockets!

All this pointed conversation got me to thinking what about my combination box-end open-end wrenches? I checked the ones in my toolbox and found they are all 12-points on the box end. What about the open end? Thanks to my keen eagle eye vision I was able to discern that the open end has no points. After some squinting and detective work with a straight edge, I discovered that the sides of the open end are slightly convex curved just like the 6-point socket! Simple differences but they make a point! (Can't believe I just said that...)



The 6-point socket walls are thicker than the 12-point and the walls are slightly convex curved between the points.
(Western Equip photo)



Box end wrenches also come in 12 point or 6-point designs.



Look closely and you will see that the open end jaws are slightly convex curved.