

Brake Light Switch!

by Tom Endy

The Model A Ford has somewhat of a peculiar wiring system design. Power for the headlights, taillights, cowl lights, and brake lights is obtained from the connection at the cutout switch on the generator and routed to a buss connection inside the light bail at the bottom of the steering column.

The light switch on the steering column directs power to the headlights, taillights, and cowl lights, but not to the brake lights. A wire runs direct from the power buss inside the light bail to the external brake light switch.

There is really no purpose for the brake light circuit to be involved with the light bail. Should there be a short circuit in the light bail, the power lead to it can be disconnected temporarily from the cutout switch connection to accommodate operating the car without lights during daylight. Unfortunately it also disconnects the brake light switch, which makes it unsafe to drive the car.

It would have been prudent if Ford had run a wire direct from the starter switch (or the fuse) to the brake light switch. With this arrangement the power lead to the light bail could be removed from the cutout switch on the generator without affecting the brake light circuit.

It is easy enough to modify the brake light circuit to isolate it from the light bail. Locate the wire on the brake light switch that comes from the light bail. Disconnect it at the brake light switch and fold it back and wrap insulating tape around it. Connect a new wire where the wire at the brake light switch was removed and run it direct to battery power. The most logical place to make the connection is at the starter switch. If a fuse modification is installed connect it there.

This wiring modification now eliminates the light bail from the stop light circuit. Should a short circuit occur in the light bail, it can be disconnected from power at the cutout switch connection and the car can be driven during daylight hours with the brake lights functional.

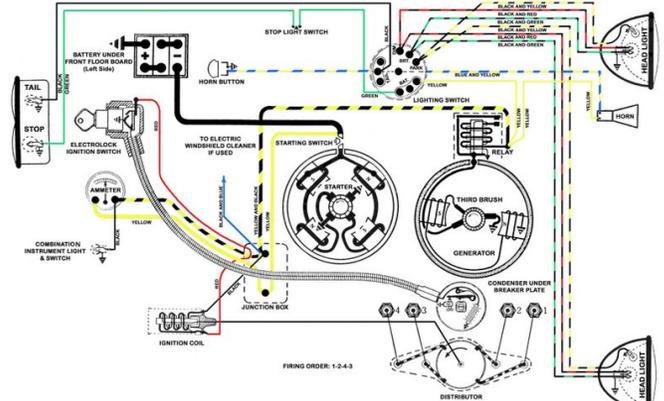


Fig. 18A. Wiring diagram showing the internal circuits of the model A Ford cars not equipped with cowl lamps, with two bulbs in each headlamp.
When starting to trace one of the several electrical circuits, begin with the positive (+) terminal of the battery or generator. The battery is the source of supply when the engine is not running, or generator is running very slowly. When the generator speed is increased to the point where its voltage becomes greater than the battery voltage, the relay points close and then the generator is the source of electrical current supply and also charges the battery. See Dyke's Automobile Encyclopedia, pages 332, 448 and 427 explaining the principle of operation of the current cut-out (relay), how to trace circuits, etc.

Model A Ford wiring diagram. Note second wire down from the top runs from the power buss inside the light bail to the brake light switch, then on to the brake light on the left.

Foreign made reproduction brake light switches are notorious for being of very poor quality and for shorting out. A good quality 1930-1931 brake light switch can be obtained from A&L Parts Specialties located at Canton Center, CT. The switch, which is a copy of the original, is a quality item manufactured by A&L. The switch includes brass bushings at each end of the operating shaft. ☺

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Switch part number A-13480B