

1997-2003 Ford Escort | Moderate | 45-60 minutes

TOOLS

5/8-inch spark plug socket with rubber insert 3/8-inch ratchet 6-inch extension Wire-type spark plug gap gauge Compressed air or shop vacuum Torque wrench Dielectric grease

PARTS

Spark plugs (4, copper or platinum, per owner's manual)
Dielectric grease for wire boots

STEPS

- 1 Let the engine cool and gather parts - Park the 1997-2003 Ford Escort on level ground,** shut the engine off, and allow it to cool for at least 30 minutes so the aluminum cylinder head is not hot enough to damage threads. Confirm you have four new copper or platinum spark plugs...
- 2 Remove the spark plug wire boots - Grasp each spark plug wire boot firmly at the base** where it meets the valve cover and twist gently while pulling straight up to release it from the plug. Do not yank the wire itself, as the carbon-core conductor inside can separate from th...
- 3 Blow debris from the plug wells - Use compressed air or a shop vacuum to clear dirt,** leaves, and grit from around each spark plug well before loosening anything. Debris that falls into an open cylinder can score the cylinder walls or hold a valve open. This step is complet...
- 4 Loosen and remove the old plugs - Fit a 5/8-inch spark plug socket with a rubber insert** onto a 6-inch extension and ratchet, then turn each plug counterclockwise to break it loose. Once loose, spin the plug out by hand and lift it clear with the socket so it does not drop....
- 5 Gap and prepare the new plugs - Check the electrode gap of each new plug with a wire-type** feeler gauge against the underhood specification, typically around 0.054 inches for these Escorts. Adjust by gently tapping the ground strap on a flat surface, never by prying the C...
- 6 Install the new plugs by hand - Thread each new spark plug into its hole by hand using** only the socket and extension, turning clockwise until the gasket seats against the cylinder head. Hand-threading first prevents cross-threading the soft aluminum head, which is a cost...
- 7 Torque the plugs to spec - Snug each plug with the ratchet to the manufacturer's torque** specification, typically 11-15 ft-lbs for these engines, without overtightening. Overtightening can strip the aluminum threads or crack the ceramic insulator. The plug is prope...
- 8 Reinstall the plug wires and test - Push each spark plug wire boot firmly onto its plug** until you feel and hear a positive click as the terminal snaps over the plug top. Route the wires back through their original looms so they do not touch the exhaust manifold. Start the en...