

Harley Davidson Kick Start To Electric Start

From Pedal to Power Button: Your Guide to Harley-Davidson Kick Start to Electric Start Conversions

Harley-Davidson. The name conjures images of rumbling engines, chrome gleaming in the sun, and the satisfying *thunk* of a kickstarter. But for many, the romance of the kickstarter gives way to the convenience of electric starting, especially as riders age or face challenging weather conditions. So, what are your options if you're craving the ease of electric starting on your kick-only Harley? This guide dives into the world of Harley-Davidson kick start to electric start conversions, covering everything from feasibility to practical implementation. *(Image: A side-by-side comparison photo - one of a classic Harley with a kickstart only, and another with an electric start button clearly visible. Caption: The Evolution of Starting Your Hog.)* **Is Your Harley a Candidate for**

Conversion? Not all Harley Davidsons are created equal when it comes to conversion possibilities. The feasibility largely depends on the model year and specific engine type. Generally, older models (pre-1965) present a more significant challenge due to the different engine designs and the lack of readily available conversion kits. However, many models from the late 60s through the early 2000s are fairly straightforward to modify. **Identifying Your Harley:**

Before you even consider a conversion, you NEED to know your bike's specifics. Finding the exact model year and engine type (e.g., Shovelhead, Knucklehead, Panhead, Evo, Twin Cam) allows you to research parts compatibility and potential hurdles. Your owner's manual or the VIN number will provide this crucial information. *(Image: A close-up photo showcasing the engine model plate on a Harley Davidson. Caption: Locating your Harley's Engine Information)* **Three Approaches to Electric Start Conversion:** You've got three primary pathways to achieving that convenient push-button start: **1. Professional Installation:** The simplest, although priciest, option is to take your motorcycle to a specialized Harley-Davidson mechanic. They possess the expertise and tools to perform a clean, reliable conversion, often using pre-made kits designed for your specific model. The

downside? The cost can be substantial, ranging from several hundred to over a thousand dollars, depending on the complexity and parts required. **2. DIY**

Conversion using a Conversion Kit: For the mechanically inclined, purchasing a pre-assembled conversion kit is an attractive middle ground. These kits typically include all the necessary components – starter motor, wiring harness, switch, and potentially a new battery – streamlining the process. However, you'll need a solid understanding of motorcycle mechanics and possess the necessary tools to complete the installation. This approach still saves money compared to professional install, though the required time investment should be considered.

(Image: A well-lit photo showing the components of an electric start conversion kit laid out neatly. Caption: An example of a typical Harley-Davidson Electric Start Conversion Kit) 3.

Building a Custom Conversion: This is the most challenging and least recommended approach unless you're experienced in custom builds. It involves sourcing individual parts, meticulously fabricating mounts, and wiring everything from scratch. While highly rewarding for experienced mechanics, this route carries the risk of mismatched components and faulty installations. **A Step-by-Step Guide (Using a**

Conversion Kit): This is a general guide and might differ based on your kit and motorcycle. Always consult your kit's instructions!

1. *Preparation:*

Disconnect the battery and carefully review the kit instructions. Gather all necessary tools (sockets, wrenches, screwdrivers, wire strippers, multimeter).

Prepare the workspace – a clean, well-lit area is

essential. 2. **Starter Motor Installation:**

Mount the starter motor according to the kit instructions. This may involve fabricating brackets or utilizing existing mounting points. 3. **Wiring Harness Installation:**

Carefully route and connect the wiring harness, paying close attention to polarity and proper connections. Use wire ties to neatly secure the wiring. 4. Switch

Installation: Install the starter switch – most kits provide detailed illustration on how to install this in an appropriate location (handlebar area for convenience).

5. **Battery Connection:** Connect the battery and test the system. The starter motor should engage when the switch is pressed. 6. Testing & Fine-Tuning:

Double-check all connections, test the starter multiple times, and address any issues before reassembling the motorcycle. *Troubleshooting:* • **Starter Motor**

Doesn't Engage: Check battery voltage, wiring connections, and the starter motor itself (it might be faulty). • *Electrical Issues:* Check fuse, wiring for

shorts, and ensure proper grounding. Use a multimeter to check voltage and continuity. (Image: A diagram showing the electrical wiring layout for a typical Harley Davidson electric start conversion.

Caption: Understanding Your Wiring) **Summary of Key**

Points: • Converting a Harley Davidson from kick start to electric start is feasible for many models, particularly those from the late 60s onwards. • Three main approaches exist: professional installation, using a conversion kit, and custom building (generally not recommended for beginners). • Carefully identify your Harley's model and engine type before starting the project. • A conversion kit significantly simplifies the process for DIY enthusiasts. • Always prioritize safety, following instructions precisely, and seeking professional assistance when needed. Frequently

Asked Questions (FAQs): 1. How much does a Harley-Davidson kick start to electric start conversion cost?

Costs vary greatly depending on the method of installation and the bike's condition. Professional installation is the most expensive, while DIY conversions can be significantly cheaper but require time and skill. 2. Will a conversion affect my bike's value? A well-executed conversion can enhance value for some buyers who desire the convenience of an electric starter without sacrificing the classic style. 3.

Is it difficult to do it myself? The difficulty depends on your mechanical aptitude and the specific bike/kit being used. Using a conversion kit makes the DIY process more manageable, but beginners should anticipate challenges.

4. **What tools do I need for a DIY conversion?** A standard set of motorcycle mechanic tools and some basic electrical tools (multimeter, wire strippers) are required. Check your kit instructions for a comprehensive list.

5. **What if something goes wrong during the conversion?** If you encounter issues beyond your expertise, immediately seek help from a qualified Harley-Davidson mechanic. Improper installations can create costly problems down the road. Converting your classic Harley to electric start can dramatically enhance your riding experience. By carefully weighing the costs and your skill level, and by always following safety guidelines, you can enjoy the convenience of push-button starting while preserving the soul of your iconic machine. Remember, safety and professionalism are paramount throughout the project. Happy riding!

From Roaring Thump to Silent

Hum: The Harley-Davidson Kick Start to Electric Start Evolution

For decades, the iconic rumble of a Harley-Davidson has been more than just an engine sound; it's been a visceral experience. And for many of those decades, that experience began with a decisive, foot-powered kick. The [kick start](#), a rite of passage for any Harley rider, was a direct connection to the machine, a ritual that separated the dedicated from the casual. But time, and technology, march on. Today, we see Harley-Davidsons offering the effortless convenience of electric start, a transition that has undoubtedly broadened the brand's appeal. This is the story of Harley-Davidson's journey from the satisfying thud of the kick start to the silent, instantaneous hum of the electric button.

The Raw Power and Romance of the Kick Start

Let's be honest, there's an undeniable allure to the kick start. It's a physical act, a demonstration of commitment. Before you even roll out onto the open road, you've engaged with your motorcycle on a fundamental level. The process itself was an art form,

a learned skill that varied from rider to rider and model to model.

Mastering the Kick: A Rider's Skill

It wasn't simply about stomping on the lever. A good kick start involved timing, finesse, and often, a bit of elbow grease. You'd find your footing, feel for compression, and then deliver a firm, deliberate kick. Too weak, and you'd just get a clunk. Too aggressive, and you might find yourself fighting the engine. The satisfaction of hearing that big V-twin roar to life after a successful kick was immense. It was a victory, a testament to your skill and your bond with the machine. For many, the [kick start](#) represented authenticity, a connection to the heritage of motorcycling that electric starters, for all their convenience, simply couldn't replicate.

The Mechanical Heartbeat: Why Kick Starts Were the Norm

In the early days of motorcycling, electric starters were a luxury, a complex and heavy addition that added to the cost and engineering challenges. Kick starts, on the other hand, were relatively simple, robust, and lightweight. They were a direct mechanical link to the crankshaft, a straightforward

way to get the engine turning over and firing. Harley-Davidson, with its focus on raw power and a no-nonsense approach to engineering, embraced the kick start for a long time. It was an integral part of the Harley-Davidson identity, a defining characteristic of the bikes that defined American motorcycling.

The Dawn of Convenience: Enter the Electric Start

As automotive technology advanced, so did the expectations of riders. The convenience offered by electric starters in cars began to trickle into the motorcycle world. While the kick start held its romantic appeal, the practicalities of everyday riding, especially for those with less physical strength or in challenging conditions, became more apparent.

The Electric Start Revolution: A Smooth Transition

The introduction of the [electric start](#) on Harley-Davidson motorcycles wasn't an overnight abandonment of tradition. It was a gradual evolution, an offering that became increasingly standard. Initially, it might have been an option, a way for riders to ease into the modern era without sacrificing the

essence of their Harley. But as the technology became more reliable and cost-effective, it was integrated into more and more models. The ability to simply push a button and have that legendary V-twin purr to life was a revelation for many. It made Harleys more accessible, more approachable, and ultimately, allowed more people to experience the freedom of the open road.

Addressing the Hesitations: Was the Electric Start "Less Harley"?

Of course, there were purists. The old guard, those who had spent years mastering the kick start, might have scoffed at the idea of a button. "Where's the grit?" they might have asked. "Where's the connection?" This sentiment is understandable. The kick start was more than just a starting mechanism; it was a symbol. However, the electric start didn't necessarily diminish the "Harley-ness" of the bike. The rumble, the torque, the styling – those core elements remained. The electric start simply removed a barrier to entry, making the Harley-Davidson experience available to a wider audience. It's akin to how the introduction of fuel injection didn't make carbureted bikes obsolete; they simply offered different experiences and catered to different preferences.

The Best of Both Worlds: Dual Systems and Modern Features

For a period, and even still on some vintage or custom builds, Harley-Davidson offered bikes with both a kick starter and an electric starter. This provided riders with the ultimate flexibility. You could enjoy the convenience of electric start for your daily commute or a quick getaway, but still have the option of engaging with the mechanical ritual of the kick start when the mood struck. This dual-system approach perfectly encapsulated the brand's ability to respect its heritage while embracing innovation.

Technological Advancements Beyond the Button

The evolution didn't stop with just adding an electric starter. Over the years, the technology behind starting systems has continued to improve. Modern electric start systems are incredibly reliable, efficient, and often incorporate features like automatic decompression to ease the load on the starter motor. This means less strain on the battery and a quicker, more consistent start every time. Furthermore, advancements in engine management, ignition systems, and fuel injection have made modern Harleys far easier to start and run than their

carbureted predecessors, regardless of the starting method.

Who Benefits from the Electric Start?

The electric start has had a profound impact on who can enjoy a Harley-Davidson. It has opened the doors for:

1. **New Riders:** Those new to motorcycling, regardless of gender or physical strength, can now confidently start a Harley without the fear of struggling with a kick start.
2. **Riders with Physical Limitations:** Individuals with knee issues, arthritis, or other conditions that make kicking a motorcycle difficult can now experience the joy of riding a Harley.
3. **Commuters and Everyday Riders:** The sheer convenience of a button start is invaluable for those who use their bikes for daily transportation, especially in stop-and-go traffic or when they need to restart quickly.
4. **Those Seeking Simplicity:** While many appreciate the mechanical engagement of a kick start, others simply want to get on and go, and the electric start provides that effortless experience.

The Legacy Lives On: Kick Starts in the Modern Era

So, what happened to the kick start? Is it gone forever? Not entirely. While it's no longer standard on most new Harley-Davidson models, the kick start remains a cherished feature for enthusiasts of vintage bikes. Restoring older models often involves ensuring the kick start is in perfect working order. Moreover, custom builders and those seeking an authentic, classic riding experience might intentionally opt for a kick-start-only setup. The knowledge and skill of kick-starting are still passed down, ensuring that this iconic piece of motorcycling history isn't forgotten.

The Enduring Spirit of Harley-Davidson

The journey from the [Harley-Davidson kick start to electric start](#) is a testament to the brand's ability to adapt and evolve while staying true to its core identity. The roar, the freedom, the brotherhood – these elements remain. The electric start simply makes that experience more accessible to more people. Whether you're a seasoned rider who remembers the satisfaction of a well-placed kick, or a newcomer drawn to the effortless rumble of a button-start V-twin, the spirit of Harley-Davidson is alive and

well, ready to carry you on your next adventure.

The transition from traditional kick start systems to electric start mechanisms marks a significant milestone in motorcycle engineering, and Harley-Davidson's shift from kick starts to electric start represents a bold evolution in its rich legacy of innovation. For over a century, Harley-Davidson riders have relied on the physical engagement of a kick start—a rugged, mechanical method that demanded strength and coordination. However, as urban riding environments grow more challenging and rider expectations evolve, the electric start has emerged as a transformative alternative, blending convenience, reliability, and modern sophistication.

The Evolution: From Kick to Electric Start

Harley-Davidson's journey toward electric start began as part of a broader industry movement toward electrification, driven by environmental concerns, stricter emissions regulations, and the desire to enhance user experience. Unlike the kick start, which requires manual effort from the rider, the electric start system activates with the simple push of an electronic

ignition button, eliminating physical strain and reducing starting times. This shift not only modernizes the riding experience but also aligns Harley-Davidson with future-ready technologies, positioning the brand at the forefront of the motorcycle industry's transformation.

How Electric Start Works: Simplicity Meets Innovation

At its core, the electric start system integrates seamlessly with a motorcycle's ignition and battery management. When the rider activates the start button—often located near the throttle grip or handlebar—electric motors engage to crank the engine, replacing the mechanical kick mechanism. This process is controlled by sophisticated electronics that ensure precise timing and consistent performance across varying weather and terrain conditions. The system draws power from the motorcycle's battery, which is optimized to deliver rapid, reliable cranking without compromising overall electrical efficiency.

Key Benefits for Riders and

Manufacturers

One of the most compelling advantages of electric start is the reduction in physical effort, especially beneficial for new riders, older riders, or those navigating tight urban spaces. The elimination of the kick start eliminates fatigue and reduces the risk of injury, making every start safer and more intuitive. For Harley-Davidson, the move enhances brand appeal among a broader demographic, including tech-savvy riders who value convenience and smart features. Additionally, electric start systems contribute to lower maintenance needs compared to traditional mechanical starters, which are prone to wear and tear. This reliability translates into greater customer satisfaction and reduced service demands, strengthening long-term rider loyalty.

Applications Across Harley-Davidson's Lineup

Electric start technology has been thoughtfully integrated across Harley-Davidson's diverse motorcycle range. From iconic cruisers like the Street Glide and Road Glide to adventure bikes such as the Pan America, the system delivers consistent performance regardless of engine size or riding style.

Modern models often pair electric start with additional features like keyless ignition and smartphone connectivity, creating a holistic, user-centric interface. This adaptability ensures that riders across different preferences and riding environments benefit from a standardized, high-performance start experience.

The Future of Electrification at Harley-Davidson

Looking ahead, electric start represents just the beginning of Harley-Davidson's electrification journey. As battery technology advances and charging infrastructure expands, the brand is poised to introduce fully electric motorcycles with integrated start systems as standard equipment. This evolution supports a broader vision of sustainable mobility without sacrificing the powerful character and timeless design that define Harley-Davidson. By embracing electric start, the company not only meets current demands but also paves the way for a future where performance, convenience, and environmental responsibility go hand in hand. The shift from kick start to electric start is more than a technical upgrade—it's a statement of progress, reflecting Harley-Davidson's commitment to honoring its

heritage while embracing the next chapter of motorcycle innovation. For riders, it means a smoother, smarter, and more enjoyable start every time, reinforcing the enduring appeal of a brand that continues to evolve with the times.

The Electric Evolution: Harley-Davidson's Bold Leap from Kickstart to Electric Start

For decades, the rhythmic thunder of a Harley-Davidson engine has been synonymous with freedom, rebellion, and the open road. The iconic rumble, often initiated by the satisfying thud of a kickstarter, is a sound deeply ingrained in the fabric of motorcycling culture. Yet, the winds of change are blowing through Milwaukee, and Harley-Davidson, a company steeped in tradition, is undertaking a monumental shift: the transition from the visceral, analog experience of the kickstart to the seamless, modern efficiency of electric start. This evolution, far more than a mere mechanical upgrade, represents a strategic pivot, a response to changing rider demographics, environmental concerns, and the relentless march of technological innovation.

The Legacy of the Kickstarter: More Than Just an Ignition

Before delving into the electric future, it's crucial to understand the profound significance of the kickstart. For generations of riders, engaging the kickstarter was a rite of passage, a physical and mental engagement with the machine. It demanded a certain skill, a nuanced understanding of the engine's temper, and a dose of sheer determination. The satisfying, often powerful, kick to bring a V-twin to life was a visceral connection, a confirmation of the rider's mastery over the beast. This wasn't just about starting an engine; it was about building a relationship with the motorcycle, a shared moment of anticipation before the journey began. The accompanying sound – the cough, sputter, and eventual roar – was a soundtrack to countless adventures, a melody that resonated with the soul of every Harley enthusiast.

Furthermore, the kickstart was a symbol of authenticity and a nod to the brand's heritage. It was a feature that distinguished Harley-Davidson from many of its competitors, especially in the era when electric starters became more commonplace. For purists, the kickstart represented an unadulterated riding experience, free from electronic intervention,

closer to the raw essence of motorcycling. The occasional difficulty in starting, while frustrating for some, was often seen as part of the charm, a challenge that made the successful ignition all the more rewarding. The tactile feedback, the effort involved, and the unique starting ritual fostered a sense of community and shared experience among Harley riders.

The Dawn of Electric Start: Embracing Accessibility and Modernity

The introduction of electric starters to Harley-Davidson motorcycles marked a significant departure, albeit a gradual one. Initially, these were premium features, reserved for higher-end models or offered as optional extras. However, as the technology matured and became more reliable and affordable, electric start transitioned from a luxury to a standard component. This shift was driven by several key factors. Firstly, it addressed the growing desire for accessibility. Not all riders possessed the physical strength or coordination required for consistent kickstarting, particularly the elderly or those with physical limitations. Electric start democratized the Harley experience, opening the doors to a wider spectrum of riders.

Secondly, the practicality of electric start became increasingly apparent. The convenience of a button press, especially in challenging situations like traffic jams or inclement weather, proved undeniable. It reduced the potential for fumbling, stalling, and the associated embarrassment or danger. Moreover, the integration of electric start paved the way for more complex electronic systems, such as fuel injection, advanced ignition systems, and rider aids, all of which contribute to a smoother, more efficient, and safer riding experience. The move towards electric start was a pragmatic step, aligning Harley-Davidson with the broader automotive industry's embrace of technological advancement.

The Electric Revolution: Beyond the Starter Button

The concept of "electric start" within Harley-Davidson's narrative has taken on a new, more profound meaning with the advent of their electric motorcycles, most notably the LiveWire. This isn't just about replacing a kickstarter with a button; it's a complete reimagining of what a Harley-Davidson can be. The LiveWire represents the pinnacle of Harley's foray into electric propulsion, showcasing a silent, instant torque, and a technologically advanced riding

experience. This represents a paradigm shift, moving away from the internal combustion engine entirely and embracing a future powered by batteries and electric motors.

The implications of this electric revolution are far-reaching. For riders accustomed to the sensory input of a gasoline engine, the silence of an electric Harley can be jarring. However, it also offers a unique perspective, allowing for a deeper immersion in the surrounding environment. The instant torque delivery provides exhilarating acceleration, a characteristic that resonates with the performance expectations associated with the Harley brand, even if the delivery mechanism is fundamentally different. The absence of engine vibration, exhaust fumes, and the need for frequent gear changes contributes to a more refined and less physically demanding ride.

Addressing the Purist's Concerns: Preserving the Harley Soul

Naturally, any significant departure from tradition, especially for a brand as iconic as Harley-Davidson, is met with a spectrum of reactions. The purists, those who cherish the raw, analog essence of traditional Harleys, often express reservations about the move

towards electric start and, by extension, electric motorcycles. The argument is that the physical act of kickstarting, the vibrations, and the characteristic exhaust note are integral to the "Harley soul." They fear that by embracing electrification and the convenience of electric start, the brand is diluting its identity and alienating its core customer base.

Harley-Davidson, however, appears to be acutely aware of these concerns. Their strategy involves a multi-pronged approach. Firstly, they continue to produce traditional gasoline-powered motorcycles, many of which still feature kickstarters or offer the option. This allows them to cater to the loyal segment of their fanbase who value the heritage. Secondly, they are positioning their electric offerings, like the LiveWire and the newer models in the "More Roads to Harley-Davidson" strategy, as a distinct yet complementary part of their brand portfolio. These are not intended to replace the iconic V-twins but rather to attract a new generation of riders and expand the brand's appeal.

The argument for electric start, even on gasoline bikes, is often framed as a necessary evolution to remain relevant. As emission regulations tighten and urban environments become more noise-sensitive, the practicality of electric start, and ultimately electric

powertrains, becomes undeniable. Harley-Davidson is navigating a delicate balancing act: preserving its storied past while forging a sustainable and inclusive future. This involves a conscious effort to infuse even their electric offerings with a sense of character and performance that aligns with the Harley-Davidson ethos, albeit through a modern lens.

The Road Ahead: A Harmonious Blend of Past and Future

The journey from kickstart to electric start, and now to full-blown electric propulsion, is a testament to Harley-Davidson's adaptability and their commitment to remaining a dominant force in the motorcycle landscape. The transition signifies a recognition that the definition of a "Harley experience" is not static. It is evolving, driven by technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, and a growing awareness of environmental responsibility.

For riders, this evolution offers more choices than ever before. Whether one craves the visceral thrill of a kickstart, the convenience of an electric starter on a gasoline-powered machine, or the silent, electrifying acceleration of an electric Harley, the brand is striving to offer something for everyone. The future of Harley-

Davidson is not about abandoning its roots but about building upon them, integrating new technologies while preserving the spirit of freedom, adventure, and individuality that has defined the brand for over a century. The evolution from kickstart to electric start is not an end but a significant milestone on a continuing journey, a bold statement that Harley-Davidson is ready to electrify the next chapter of motorcycling history.

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growth in the digital era.

Questions & Answers About harley davidson kick start to electricis start

No	Question	Answer
1	Why are Harley-Davidson riders considering the switch from kick start to electric start?	Many riders are opting for electric start for convenience and accessibility. It eliminates the physical exertion of kicking, making it easier to start the bike, especially for those with physical limitations or in challenging starting situations like traffic. It also appeals to a broader audience who may not be accustomed to or comfortable with kick starting.
2	What are the main advantages of an electric start system on a Harley-Davidson?	The primary advantages are ease of use, speed, and reliability. Electric start allows for quick and effortless ignition with the push of a button, reducing stress on the rider and the motorcycle's engine. It's particularly beneficial in hot weather or when the engine is already warm, preventing kickback issues.

3	Are there any downsides to converting a classic Harley-Davidson from kick start to electric start?	The main downsides involve authenticity and potential complexity. For purists, a kick start is part of the classic Harley experience. Electrification can alter the bike's original aesthetic and may require significant modifications, potentially impacting its resale value to collectors who prefer original setups. The added electrical components also introduce potential points of failure.
4	Is it possible to convert an older Harley-Davidson that only has a kick start to an electric start?	Yes, it's a common modification. Various aftermarket kits are available that allow you to add an electric starter to a kick-only Harley-Davidson. These kits typically include a starter motor, solenoid, battery cables, and sometimes a different transmission end cover to accommodate the starter. Professional installation is often recommended.

5	Does adding an electric start system to a kick-start Harley-Davidson significantly change its riding experience?	For the rider, the most noticeable change is the convenience of starting. The core riding dynamics of the motorcycle remain the same. However, you'll need to ensure your electrical system can handle the increased load of the starter motor and potentially a larger battery. Some riders also mention a slight weight increase due to the added components.
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