

Corvair Starters

The Corvair starter is essentially a standard GM starter (with some Corvair specific parts) from that era that performed very well. It was designed with the potential for multiple rebuilds and the Corvair starter and drive train configuration eliminated the need for shimming to attain the correct meshing when cranking. If you are checking or performing service on a starter, the following items may be useful:

- The shop manual states that the Corvair starter is capable of 30 seconds of continuous cranking before overheating. That is a long time, considering that many new car manuals state: “10 seconds maximum”. Our old starters are pretty tough.
- All Corvair starters are visually and mechanically identical (see next paragraph) with the exception of the 1960 model which has a different nose cone; it mounts the solenoid farther clockwise on the starter (viewed from the back). All of the other Corvair starters and rebuild parts are the same. If you are looking for a starter drive assembly, you will have to get one specifically for a Corvair; the standard GM drive assembly is shorter. O’reilly lists one for Corvairs but it is a standard GM and it is too short.
- The Corvair starter for the Powerglide model has a rubber seal installed in the nose cone to protect the armature and brushes from unfiltered air that is forced around the torque converter for cooling. Nobody but a fanatical Corvair rebuilder will recognize this and I don’t know of any vendor that offers that item (good used seals are possible). I assume most rebuilders don’t think it is necessary since they never offer it. A minor item (?) but part of Corvair history.
- Replacement solenoids (made in China) are lighter in weight than original units and come with a shorter and lighter spring to compensate. If you use the new solenoid with the original GM spring the solenoid may not be strong enough to pull in the starter drive. I found this out in the usual way. Used as a matched pair, the replacement solenoids and springs seem to work fine.
- The 1960-1961 shop manual shows an “assist spring” behind the starter drive assembly but if you check the 1965 manual you will notice the spring has disappeared from the exploded view. The spring is not necessary and if you install one it could very well cause the drive teeth to ding on the ring gear while the engine is running. The ’60 & ’61 manuals used an exploded view graphic from full size GM products which included the wrong nose cone as well as use of the spring. Some other pictures included the wrong drive assembly. Even in the ’65 manual there is a picture with the wrong nose cone. Again, use no spring.

