

Surely the thicker the oil the better!

This isn't always true - even when using a petroleum oil. Although it is true that heavier viscosity oils (which are generally thought of as being thicker) will hold up better under heavy loads and high temperatures, this doesn't necessarily make them a better choice for all applications.

On many newer vehicles only 0w-40, 5w40 or 10w40 engine oils are recommended by the manufacturer. If you choose to use a higher viscosity oil than what is recommended, at the very least you are likely to reduce performance of the engine. Fuel economy will likely go down and engine performance will drop.

In the winter months it is highly recommended that you not use a heavier grade oil than what is recommended by the manufacturer. In cold start conditions you could very well be causing more engine wear than when using a lighter viscosity oil. In the summer months, going to a heavier grade is less of an issue, but there are still some things to be aware of.

Moving one grade up from the recommended viscosity is not likely to cause any problems (say from a 10w40 to a 10w50 oil). The differences in pumping and flow resistance will be slight. Although, efficiency of the engine will decrease, the oil will likely still flow adequately through the engine to maintain proper protection. However, it will not likely protect any better than the lighter weight oil recommended by the manufacturer.

Moving two grades up from the recommended viscosity (say 10w40 to 10w-60) is a little more extreme and could cause long term engine damage if not short term. Although the oil will still probably flow ok through the engine, it is a heavier viscosity oil. As such it will be more difficult to pump the oil through the engine. More friction will be present than with a lighter viscosity oil. More friction means more heat. In other words, by going to a thicker oil in the summer months, you may actually be causing more heat build-up within the engine. You'll still be providing adequate protection from metal to metal contact in the engine by going with a high viscosity, but the higher viscosity will raise engine temperatures.

In the short run, this is no big deal. However, over the long term, when engine components are run at higher temperatures, they WILL wear out more quickly. As such, if you intend on

keeping the vehicle for awhile, keep this in mind if you're considering using a heavier weight oil than the manufacturer recommends.

The best advice is to stay away from viscosity grades that are not mentioned in your owner's manual.