



Version 1 - 11/08/2024

# **Ford Flathead Distributor Reference Guide. 1932 through 1953**

First Edition

By Lee Johnson and Regis Gagnon

# Contents

1. Introduction.
2. Ford Flathead Helmet Style Distributor 1932-1941.
3. Ford Crab Cap or 2 Piece Cap (Pancake Style)1942-1948.
4. Long Camshaft or Aftermarket Camshaft Notes for adapting the Crab Distributor to a Long or an Aftermarket Camshaft (Note: Not a common occurrence, except for unknown changes by previous owners or dedicated High Performance modifications to the later Ford Flatheads).
5. 1949-1953 8BA Distributor. Resembles modern distributor.

# Introduction

This guide is intended to help identify the various Ford Flathead Distributors, the differences between them and how they can be swapped out between different years of the Ford Flathead engine.

## Ford Flathead Helmet Distributor Reference

Year: 1932-1936 Helmet (1<sup>st</sup> release). **3 screw coil** with **3 bolt mounting**. Note Mounting Holes appear to be a different pattern than the 1937 -1941 **2 screw coil** distributor, but the mounting remains the same and the distributors are interchangeable between 1932 to 1941.



**VINTAGE AUTO GARAGE**

1932-1936 Ford Flathead  
Coil Adapter Kit, 3 Screw -  
18-12036-S

Year: 1937-1941 Helmet (2<sup>nd</sup> Release) **2 screw coil** with **3 bolt mounting**. Will interchange with earlier distributors. Note: There is one unused hole on this design.



★★★★★

**VINTAGE AUTO GARAGE**

1937-1941 Ford Flathead  
Coil Adapter 2 Screw - 78-  
12036-S

To adapt these distributors to a later '42 to '48 Flathead you need the 'Button' to make up the difference for the shorter cam. Vintage Auto Garage PN 91012710



## Ford Flathead Crab or Pancake Distributor Reference

Year: 1942-1948 Pancake or “Crab” Distributor, named for the early 1 piece “Crab” cap, **but also came later on with the 2 Piece Cap as shown below**



Crab Cap (1942-1945)

2 Piece Cap (1946-1948)



To adapt the 2 Bolt, to the 3 Bolt, a space is needed for the longer drive snout  
Speedway PN 9103241



[Speedway Motors](#) | #9103241

### Flathead Ford Distributor Adaptor, 2-Bolt Distributor to 3-Bolt

★★★★★ 9 Reviews | 3 Questions

- Allow you to swap distributors around on your flathead
- This adaptor fits most aftermarket performance cams
- In some cases, earlier stock engines may have a "shallow-nose" camshaft

See next page for caveats on modified Flatheads that may have an aftermarket “Long Camshaft” in place of the “Short Camshaft”

## Ford Flathead Distributor Reference – Long Camshaft Notes

**Early Long Camshaft or Aftermarket Long Camshaft installed in a Late 1942-1948 Flathead, where the Factory had a Short Camshaft in place. *Note: Not a common circumstance.***

The 2 Bolt “Crab” Distributor will need a spacer plate to **push the distributor out**, to accommodate the Long or Aftermarket Cam. This applies to either the Crab or 2 Piece Cap (same distributor, different cap).



Speedway Motors PN 9104248



Speedway Motors | #9104248

### Flathead Ford 2-Bolt Distributor Spacer

★★★★★ 5 Reviews | [Ask a Question](#)

- Sometimes we want to mix and match parts different than Henry planned
- These spacers allow you to space out your 2-bolt distributor if you have a long snout camshaft
- Space out 2-bolt dist, if you have the long cam snout. 3/8" thick

[See More](#)

## Ford Flathead 8BA Distributor Reference

1949 to 1953 8BA Distributor

Ford used a different timing cover on their Flathead Engines along with a drive gear to put a "Modern Style" distributor on their venerable Flathead. Final years of this engine and design.

