FIGURE 39.1 A high-voltage pulse is sent to the spark plug to ignite the air-fuel mixture in the cylinder.

FIGURE 39.2 The primary ignition system is used to trigger and, therefore, create the secondary (high-voltage) spark from the ignition coil. The high-voltage spark is then sent to the spark plug by the distributor and through spark plug wires.
The firing order is cast or stamped on the intake manifold on most engines that have a distributor ignition.

A Ford V-6 engine that uses a waste-spark type ignition system. Note that each of the three coils has two spark plug wires. Both the cylinders fire at the same time.

An overhead camshaft engine equipped with variable valve timing on both the intake and exhaust camshafts and the coil-on-plug ignition.
FIGURE 39.6 This General Motors V-8 engine is equipped with an ignition system that uses a coil and a short spark plug wire. Each cylinder has a coil and uses a short spark plug wire from the coil to the spark plug.

FIGURE 39.7 A spark tester looks like a regular spark plug with an alligator clip attached to the shell. This tester has a specified gap that requires at least 25,000 volts (25 kV) to fire.

FIGURE 39.8 A close-up showing the recessed center electrode on a spark tester. It is recessed 3/8 in. into the shell, and the spark must jump another 3/8 in. to the shell for a total gap of 3/4 in.
FIGURE 39.9 Spark plug wires carry high-voltage pulses from the ignition coil or distributor to the spark plugs. Always take the time to install spark plug wires back into the original holding brackets/cabling, coatings.

FIGURE 39.10 Spark plug wire boot pliers are a handy addition to any tool box.

FIGURE 39.11 This spark plug boot on an overhead-camshaft engine has been arcing to the valve cover causing a misfire to occur.
FIGURE 39.12 Measuring the resistance of a spark plug wire with a multimeter set to the ohms position. The reading of 16.03 kΩ (16,030 ohms) is okay because the wire is about 2 ft long. Maximum allowable resistance for a spark plug wire this long would be 20 kΩ (20,000 ohms).

FIGURE 39.13 Parts of a spark plug.

FIGURE 39.14 When removing spark plugs, it is wise to arrange them so that they can be compared and any problem can be identified with a particular cylinder.
A spark plug thread chaser is a low-cost tool that hopefully will not be used often, but is necessary in order to clean the threads before installing new spark plugs.