SOFTWARE & TECH

70 Hp Johnson Outboard Ignition Switch Wiring

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Understanding the 70 Hp Johnson Outboard Ignition Switch Wiring: A Complete Guide

If you own a 70 horsepower Johnson outboard motor, you know how vital a reliable ignition system is to your time on the water. The ignition switch is the command center that brings your engine to life, and its wiring can sometimes become a source of frustration. Whether you are replacing an old switch, troubleshooting a no-start condition, or simply performing routine maintenance, understanding the **70 Hp Johnson Outboard Ignition Switch Wiring** is essential. This guide will walk you through the basics of the electrical system, provide a step-by-step wiring approach, discuss common problems, and offer tips to ensure your outboard starts reliably season after season.

The Role of the Ignition Switch in a 70 HP Johnson Outboard

The ignition switch in your Johnson outboard does more than just complete a circuit. It controls power distribution to the starter solenoid, the ignition coil, the choke, and often the safety lanyard kill switch. In a 70 HP model, typically a two-stroke or early four-stroke design, the switch is often a simple key-operated unit with positions for Off, On, Start, and sometimes Choke. The wiring harness connects the switch to the engine's electrical components, and each wire carries a specific function. Knowing the color codes and terminal assignments is the first step toward correct installation or troubleshooting.

Why Proper Wiring Matters

Incorrect wiring can lead to a range of issues: the engine may not crank, it could crank but not start, the electric choke may fail to engage, or you might drain the battery overnight. In worst-case scenarios, a miswire can cause a short circuit, damaging the switch or the engine's control module. For a 70 HP Johnson outboard, the ignition switch wiring diagram is a map that ensures every connection is purposeful. Taking time to understand it will save you money, time, and frustration on the water.

Identifying the Wires: Standard Color Codes for 70 HP Johnson Outboards

Johnson outboards (as well as Evinrude models from the same era) follow a loose but commonly recognized wiring color code. While variations exist depending on the year of manufacture (1970s, 1980s, 1990s, etc.), the majority of 70 HP engines use the following wire colors for the ignition switch harness:

- Red (or Red/Purple): Battery positive (12V power from the battery or starter solenoid).
- Brown: Usually the choke solenoid power (engages when key is pressed or turned to choke position).
- Black (or Black/Yellow): Ground connection.
- Purple: Accessory or ignition power (provides 12V to the ignition system when the key is On).
- Yellow (or Yellow/Red): Starter solenoid trigger (sends power to the solenoid only in Start position).
- White: Sometimes used for the safety lanyard kill switch circuit (grounding the ignition).

These colors are typical, but always verify with your specific model year. A 70 HP Johnson outboard built in 1985 may have slightly different wiring than one built in 1995. The best practice is to check the service manual or a reliable online diagram before cutting or connecting wires.

Step-by-Step Guide to Wiring the 70 HP Johnson Ignition Switch

Before you begin any electrical work, disconnect the battery negative terminal to prevent accidental shorts or sparks. Also, have a multimeter, wire strippers, crimpers, heat shrink tubing, and the correct replacement switch on hand. Follow these steps for a clean, safe installation:

1. Remove the Old Switch

If replacing an existing switch, take a photo of the wiring before disconnecting. Note which terminal each wire connects to. On many Johnson switches, terminals are marked with letters: M (magneto/ignition kill), B (battery), S (starter), A (accessory/ignition), and C (choke). Compare your wire colors to the terminal labels. Remove the switch by unscrewing the retaining nut from the back of the dashboard panel.

2. Prepare the Wires

Inspect the harness wires for corrosion, cracks, or frayed ends. If the wire ends are damaged, cut back to clean copper and strip about 1/4 inch of insulation. Slide a piece of heat shrink onto each wire before crimping the connector.

3. Identify the Correct Terminals

Using your photo or the wiring diagram, assign each wire to the appropriate switch terminal. For a typical 70 HP Johnson outboard ignition switch wiring setup:

- Terminal B (Battery): Connect the red (or red/purple) wire from the battery positive or from the starter solenoid side that remains hot.
- Terminal M (Magneto/Ground): This terminal grounds the ignition when the key is Off. Usually connects to the black or black/yellow wire. Some switches have two M terminals – one for the kill circuit and one for a common ground.
- Terminal S (Starter): Connect the yellow or yellow/red wire that goes to the starter solenoid trigger.
- Terminal A (Accessory/Ignition): Connect the purple wire that provides 12V to the ignition coil and other electronics when the key is On.
- Terminal C (Choke): Connect the brown wire that powers the electric choke solenoid. This terminal is energized only when the key is pushed in (choke position) or turned to a dedicated start/choke position.

4. Crimp and Secure Connections

Use ring or spade terminals to fit the switch posts. Crimp firmly, then solder the connection for added reliability (optional but recommended). Slide the heat shrink over the crimped joint and apply heat to seal. Ensure no bare wire is exposed.

5. Mount the New Switch

Push the switch through the dashboard hole, install the bezel and nut, and tighten just enough to hold it in place without cracking the panel. Reconnect the battery negative terminal.

6. Test the Wiring

Turn the key to the On position – you should hear a click from the control box (if equipped) and see a warning horn or lights. Turn to Start – the engine should crank. If the engine cranks but doesn't start, check the purple wire for 12V at the ignition coil. If the starter does not engage, verify the yellow wire connection and the starter solenoid. Test the choke by pushing the key in – you should hear the choke solenoid click. Finally, turn the key to Off – the engine should die immediately. If it continues running, the M (kill) circuit is likely not grounding properly.

Common Wiring Problems and Troubleshooting

Even with a correct wiring diagram, issues can arise. Here are typical problems with the 70 HP Johnson outboard ignition switch wiring and how to diagnose them:

Engine Cranks but Does Not Start

This often points to a lack of spark. Check the purple wire at the ignition coil with a multimeter; it should show battery voltage when the key is in the On or Start position. If voltage is absent, the switch's internal contacts for the A terminal may be faulty. Also inspect the kill circuit (M terminal) – if the black wire is grounded continuously, the ignition is permanently disabled.

Engine Starts but Dies When Key is Released from Start

This indicates the ignition circuit loses power in the On position. The purple wire may be connected to the S terminal instead of A, so the ignition only gets power while cranking. Recheck your terminal assignments.

Starter Runs Continuously

If the starter keeps spinning after releasing the key, the yellow wire to the solenoid may be stuck due to a short inside the switch, or the solenoid itself is faulty. Disconnect the yellow wire from the switch; if the starter stops, replace the switch.

Battery Drains Overnight

Parasitic draw often comes from the choke solenoid remaining engaged. Test the brown wire: it should have power only when the choke button is pressed. If it stays hot, the switch is defective. Also check for a constant 12V on the purple circuit – some accessories may keep the ignition coil energized even when Off if the switch is miswired.

Tools and Safety Tips for Wiring Your 70 HP Johnson

Working with outboard electrical systems requires caution. Keep these safety tips in mind:

- Always disconnect the battery before touching ignition switch wires.
- Use a marine-grade switch and connectors to resist corrosion.
- Use dielectric grease on all connections to prevent moisture ingress.
- Label wires if you are not immediately connecting them.
- Never bypass the safety lanyard kill switch – it is a critical safety device.
- Double-check your work with a multimeter before fully reassembling the dashboard.

Finding Wiring Diagrams and Replacement Parts

If you don't have the original manual for your 70 HP Johnson outboard, you can often find the ignition switch wiring diagram online. Search for "Johnson 70 HP ignition switch wiring diagram" along with your specific year, such as "1990 Johnson 70 HP wiring diagram." Many boating forums and marine parts retailers host scanned copies of factory manuals. For replacement switches, look for OEM Evinrude/Johnson parts or high-quality aftermarket units that include the correct terminal layout. Be wary of generic switches – they may not have the proper positions for choke or kill circuits.

When ordering a new switch, confirm the part number with your engine's model number. The 70 HP Johnson outboard ignition switch wiring is consistent across many years, but small variations exist. A wise step is to purchase a switch that comes with a matching harness adapter if available.

Conclusion

Mastering the 70 Hp Johnson Outboard Ignition Switch Wiring is not just about getting the engine to start – it is about ensuring reliable, safe operation every time you head out. By understanding the standard color codes, following a careful step-by-step installation, and knowing how to troubleshoot common faults, you can keep your 70 HP Johnson running smoothly for years. Always consult your specific engine's wiring diagram, use quality components, and prioritize safety. With the right knowledge and a methodical approach, the ignition switch becomes a simple, foolproof part of your outboard's electrical system.

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