It’s in the Drivetrain

Follow the power from the tank (or battery) to the wheels.

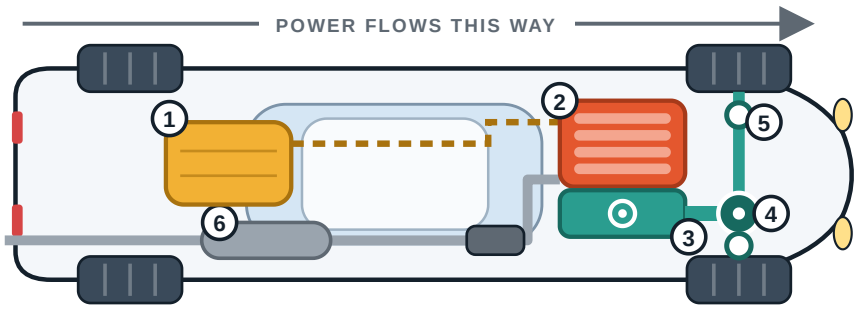
Powertrain: everything that makes power and sends it to the wheels.

Drivetrain: just the delivery part, everything between the engine or motor and the wheels.

Some mechanics use these two words loosely. This page uses them this way.

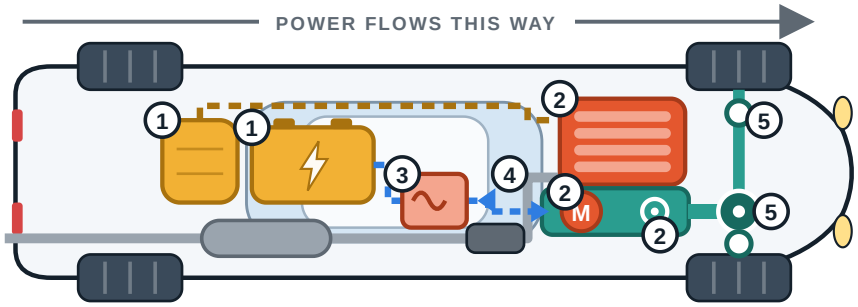
Energy source | Power maker | Delivery (the drivetrain) | Wheels | fuel line | electric cable | exhaust

GAS CAR *Traditional, engine only*



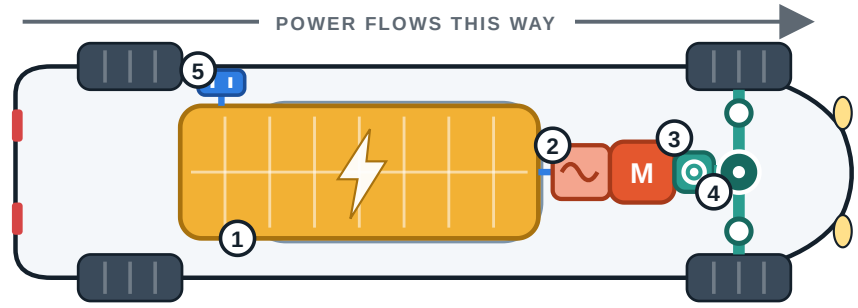
1. **Fuel tank** holds the gasoline.
2. **Engine** burns it to make power.
3. **Transmission** (the gearbox) matches engine speed to wheel speed.
4. **Differential** lets the wheels turn at different speeds in a corner.
5. **Axles** are the shafts that carry power to the wheels. The bendy joints at their ends are **CV joints**.
6. **Exhaust** carries off and cleans the engine’s fumes.

HYBRID CAR *Gas engine + electric motor (the most common layout)*



1. **Fuel tank and a high-voltage battery** both feed power.
2. **A gasoline engine and an electric motor** share the work, blended by a special transmission.
3. **Inverter** converts the battery’s current for the motor.
4. **Regenerative braking** recharges the battery when you slow down.
5. **The delivery parts** (axles, differential) work as in a gas car.

ELECTRIC CAR *Battery and motor only*



1. **A large high-voltage battery pack** sits flat under the floor.
2. **Inverter** converts and controls the current.
3. **The electric motor** spins the wheels.
4. **A single-speed gear** (no shifting) delivers power to the axles.
5. **A charge port** feeds the battery.

No engine, no fuel tank, no exhaust.

Front-wheel, rear-wheel, or all-wheel drive? That only changes which wheels get the power. These drawings show front-wheel drive.

Check your owner’s manual. It shows your car’s exact layout. Hybrids in particular vary from one model to the next.

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The Mechanic-Speak Decoder

What they say, what it means, and which cars have it.

They say	It means	Gas	Hybrid	Electric
Drivetrain	The parts that carry power to the wheels.	✓	✓	✓
Transmission	The gearbox.	✓	✓ (special type)	**One fixed gear**
Differential	Lets the wheels turn at different speeds.	✓	✓	✓
CV joint	Flexible joint on the axle.	✓	✓	✓
Inverter	Converts battery current for the motor.	–	✓	✓
Regenerative braking	Recharges the battery as you slow down.	–	✓	✓
Oil change, spark plugs, timing belt	Engine upkeep.	✓	✓	**None**
Exhaust, catalytic converter	Cleans and quiets the engine's fumes.	✓	✓	**None**
Coolant	Keeps parts from overheating.	✓	✓	✓ (cools battery and motor)
Brake pads	Parts that grip the wheel to stop the car. They last longer on hybrids and electrics.	✓	✓	✓
12-volt battery	The ordinary small battery that runs the lights and electronics. Every car has one.	✓	✓	✓

Four questions to ask your mechanic

1. Which part, exactly?
2. Can you show me?
3. Is it safe to drive?
4. What happens if I wait?

A good mechanic is happy to answer these.

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