Christmas Lights On My "A"

Daniel Hahn

I thought I would share my tip for how I have recycled old Christmas lights. I usually put a Christmas wreath on the spare tire on the back of the car sometime in December each year. I wired up a set of old lights to work on 6 volts, and put a switch under the dash. People have stopped me to take a picture, and I get nice comments, so I try to do this every year.

I have a 6 volt positive ground system, but this will work for a 12 volt system with a couple of changes. (for 12 volts, use 5 or 6 lights in each series, with 5 being a little brighter.) These lights use a little over 2 volts each, so to make the series work on MY car I wired 3 lights in a series, then did that again, and again, hooking each 3-light series together until I had what I wanted for the total. (The 2 volts is not exact, but it's easier to understand by saying 2 volts x 3 lights makes 6 volts total.) These lights don't care if they get AC or DC current -- they light up the same as long as the voltage total is about 6 volts. Here is how I do this.

A string of Christmas lights normally has 3 wires, one with all the sockets connected and two other wires.Start by cutting off both ends, and removing the two wires that don't have the sockets. Now, on the string of sockets, pick one end and put a small piece of masking tape on that end, then mark that end as positive (+).

Count off the 1st, 2nd, & 3rd lights (for a 6 volt system), and splice in a piece of wire between the 3rd and 4th bulb socket, and mark that wire as negative (-). I use the wire I removed from the original light string.

Count the 4th, 5th, & 6th lights and splice in another piece of wire between the 6th and 7th socket, mark this one positive (+).

Count the next three lights and splice in another negative (-) wire. Continue this 3-light process until you have as many lights as you want on the string. Remember, between every 3-light series you have to add a wire, and these wires alternate as positive (+) and negative (-).

Next connect all the positive wires together which will go to ground, and all the negative wires together which will go to the power. I like using a soldering iron and either black tape or heat shrink tubing to cover bare wires. When this is finished the string of lights can be wrapped around the Christmas wreath, which I attach to the spare tire on the back of my car.

To connect power to the lights I use a 16-gauge extension cord. From the lights, the long cord goes under the car with a couple tie wraps, then up to the side kick panel on the driver's side. This hooks up to a single pole toggle switch. Power comes from the terminal box to the toggle switch, with an inline fuse between the terminal box and the switch for safety.

I know it helps sometimes to actually see this stuff to understand it, so feel free to contact me if you want to try one.