

GENERIC · POWERTRAIN

P073A

OBD-II DIAGNOSTIC TROUBLE CODE (DTC)

P073A

Stuck in Gear 5

P073A indicates that the transmission control module has commanded fifth gear but the actual gear ratio measured from the input and output speed sensors does not match the expected fifth-gear ratio. The computer detects a stuck condition because the ratio remains outside the acceptable window for a calibrated amount of time, meaning the transmission is not engaging or disengaging fifth gear as commanded.

SYSTEM	CODE TYPE	SEVERITY	FIX DIFFICULTY	AREA
Powertrain	Generic (all makes)	Medium	Professional	Transmission

Symptoms you may notice

- The malfunction indicator lamp illuminates on the dashboard, often with no other noticeable symptoms.
- The transmission may feel like it is slipping or flaring during the 4-5 shift or while cruising in fifth gear.
- Harsh or delayed engagement when shifting into fifth gear, or the transmission may refuse to enter fifth gear at all.
- The engine may rev higher than normal at highway speeds because the transmission stays in fourth gear.
- In some vehicles, the transmission may enter limp mode and stay in a single gear until the code is cleared.
- A noticeable clunk or jolt may occur when the transmission attempts to apply or release fifth gear.

Common causes, most likely first

- Low or degraded automatic transmission fluid (ATF) causing poor hydraulic pressure and delayed fifth-gear engagement.
- A faulty shift solenoid or solenoid pack responsible for directing fluid to the fifth-gear clutch or band.
- Sticking or worn fifth-gear clutch pack or band, preventing proper engagement or release.
- A malfunctioning transmission control module (TCM) or corrupted adaptive learning values.
- Damaged or chafed wiring harness or connector at the transmission, causing intermittent solenoid control.
- A faulty input or output speed sensor providing inaccurate ratio data to the TCM.
- Internal valve body wear or a stuck shift valve preventing proper hydraulic routing for fifth gear.



How to diagnose and fix it

- 1 Check the automatic transmission fluid level and condition; top off or replace fluid if it is low, dark, or burnt-smelling.
- 2 Use a scan tool to read live data for commanded gear, actual gear ratio, and solenoid activation states during a test drive.
- 3 Inspect the transmission wiring harness and connectors for damage, corrosion, or loose pins, especially at the solenoid pack.
- 4 Test the shift solenoids with a multimeter for resistance and compare to manufacturer specifications; replace if out of range.
- 5 Perform a transmission adaptive learning reset or relearn procedure with the scan tool after any repair or fluid service.
- 6 Remove the transmission pan to inspect for debris, burnt clutch material, or a sticking valve body; service or replace components as needed.
- 7 If internal mechanical damage is confirmed, remove and rebuild or replace the transmission, then clear codes and verify proper fifth-gear operation.

Before you replace the transmission

- A low fluid level or a clogged transmission filter can cause P073A without any internal mechanical failure, so always verify fluid condition and level first.
- The code can be set by a faulty speed sensor even when the transmission mechanically shifts fine, because the TCM calculates ratio from sensor inputs rather than direct gear position.
- Adaptive learning values that have drifted over time can trigger a false stuck-in-gear code; a relearn procedure often resolves it without parts replacement.
- Intermittent wiring faults at the transmission connector frequently mimic solenoid failure, so wiggle-test the harness while watching live solenoid data.
- P073A does not always mean fifth gear is physically stuck; it can also set if the transmission fails to leave fifth gear when a downshift is commanded.

Can I keep driving with P073A?

You can usually drive the vehicle short distances to a repair shop, but avoid highway speeds and heavy acceleration because the transmission may not shift properly and could overheat. If the transmission is in limp mode or slipping severely, stop driving and arrange a tow to prevent further damage.



Tools that help

- OBD-II scan tool with live transmission data capability
- Digital multimeter for testing solenoids and wiring
- Transmission fluid level dipstick or scan tool fluid temperature reading
- Socket set and drain pan for fluid service
- Manufacturer service information for solenoid resistance specifications and relearn procedures

Reading P073A

P	Powertrain: engine, transmission and emissions.
0	Generic (SAE) code: it means the same thing on every OBD-II vehicle.
7	Transmission.
3A	The exact fault within that area.

Often seen with

P0715 Input/Turbine Speed Sensor Circuit Malfunction · **P0730** Incorrect Gear Ratio · **P0735** Gear 5 Incorrect Ratio · **P0740** Torque Converter Clutch Circuit Malfunction · **P0750** Shift Solenoid 'A'

See it working

Watch the animated explainer [How an Automatic Transmission Works, Gear by Gear](#) on Auto Veteran to see the parts involved moving.

Full guide, related articles and animations: <https://www.autoveteran.tech/dtc-codes/p073a/>

