

# Is it worth it?

# The Terminator

In this new regular feature, **DAVE ROGERS** will be looking closely at recent technology, products or kit, and reviewing them with respect to the value they offer to the professional or home technician. We'll evaluate each with a final score, to advise whether or not you should consider a purchase.

 Sykes-Pickavant.

## What is it?

The **Terminator** is a voltage probe like a multimeter, but it can also evaluate dynamic signals – for example, fast-switching pulses such as injectors, crank position sensors, etc.

## What can you do with it?

The device measures and displays voltage, so you can use it for normal fault-finding and voltage measurement applications around the vehicle. The pulse analysis capability is the real plus for diagnostics, as fast-moving voltages cannot be seen on a normal multimeter – for that, you usually need to use an oscilloscope, which allows you to see the waveforms and signal switching. This is where the Terminator comes into its own: it's simple to use and cheap to buy when compared with a full oscilloscope.

## How do you use it?

The form factor of this device is similar to a logic probe (these are extensively used in electronics). It has a probe end that you connect to the test point, plus an earth



lead that needs to be connected to the frame/chassis. The device has LED indicators for voltage levels, plus an LED display that gives an appropriate reading according to the measurement mode. All you need to do is select voltage, frequency or pulse mode, then measure. For steady state signals (i.e. battery voltage), the display shows a static reading; for dynamic signals, the LED indicators flash to show a switching signal and the display will show frequency or duty factor (according to the measurement setting).

## Overall scoring:

Sykes-Pickavant Terminator  
out of 100%

Quality/durability	60%
Usability	80%
Features/functions	60%
Price/performance	80%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>70%</b>

### Key:

Less than 40%	Unlikely to be useful except for a very specific application or interest group; not great value for money in general terms.
40-60%	Worth taking a look, may be of interest for certain applications.
60-80%	Well worth looking at – could be a great bit of kit or a real timesaver.
80%+	An absolute must – every toolbox should have one.



Simple, steady state voltage at the battery – LED display reads volts.

## How can it help?

The **Terminator** offers a number of benefits. It's compact and self-contained, not requiring a PC, so it's easy to carry round in a toolbox or bag. It's also easy to set up, so you won't waste time messing about configuring it before measuring – just connect it up, set the mode and read off the signal/display.

The supplied extension lead and pin probe gives more flexibility when searching for the correct signal.



The Terminator is connected to the camshaft sensor. Correct switching is shown by flashing LEDs, while the display shows signal frequency at 7Hz (1 pulse per cycle =  $7 \times 2 \times 60 = 840$ rpm).

The display is clear, with flashing LEDs showing if a dynamic signal is working. Of course, you won't get detailed waveforms but, for most applications, the information from the **Terminator** is sufficient for problem diagnosis.

### What are the alternatives?

The **Terminator** fits in between two main alternatives: a digital multimeter (DMM) and an oscilloscope. Most DMMs can only be used to measure steady state conditions, with very few having a pulse measurement capability – however, you can get one for a tenner, so they are cheap. Oscilloscopes are a great tool, but they need setting up and often require a computer to run them, and you need to have some experience of using one and understanding the signals. In addition to this, they are much more expensive than a DMM.

### Is it worth it?

For general-purpose diagnostics and home use, the **Terminator** is a great tool. Although you can't use it to analyse complex signals, it's ideal for a quick look and to check measurements. For engine non-start situations, where you need to confirm the sensor/actuator switching, the device comes into its own, mainly due to the fact that it's quick and easy to see the presence of a working signal.

### Price

RRP £79.50 exc VAT (shop around though and check for special offers)

### Website

[www.sykes-pickavant.com](http://www.sykes-pickavant.com)

### Youtube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3Z9VpmyfBY>

In summary, the **Terminator** is useful for home diagnostics. It can tell you a lot more than a multimeter, but not as much as an oscilloscope. However, at the price, the value is high. It's an ideal addition to your arsenal of diagnostic hardware tools



Dave Rogers is a qualified master technician, auto electrician and technical author. Follow Dave at: [twitter.com/autoelex](https://twitter.com/autoelex), [facebook.com/autoelex](https://facebook.com/autoelex) or [motortradebook.com/autoelex](https://motortradebook.com/autoelex)

and, if used in conjunction with a multimeter, you'll be able cover most requirements.



We have ONE **Terminator** to give away to a lucky reader, courtesy of Sykes-Pickavant. To be in with a chance of winning, fill in your details below and send to: **Car Mechanics Terminator, Bauer Media, Media House, Lynchwood, Peterborough PE2 6EA.** Or email: [cmcomps@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:cmcomps@bauermedia.co.uk) with the subject 'Terminator comp'. Competition closes October 20, 2011.



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- CM visit: Klarius Group
- Ford Galaxy TDi service
- Final part of the Escort Mexico MkVI project
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