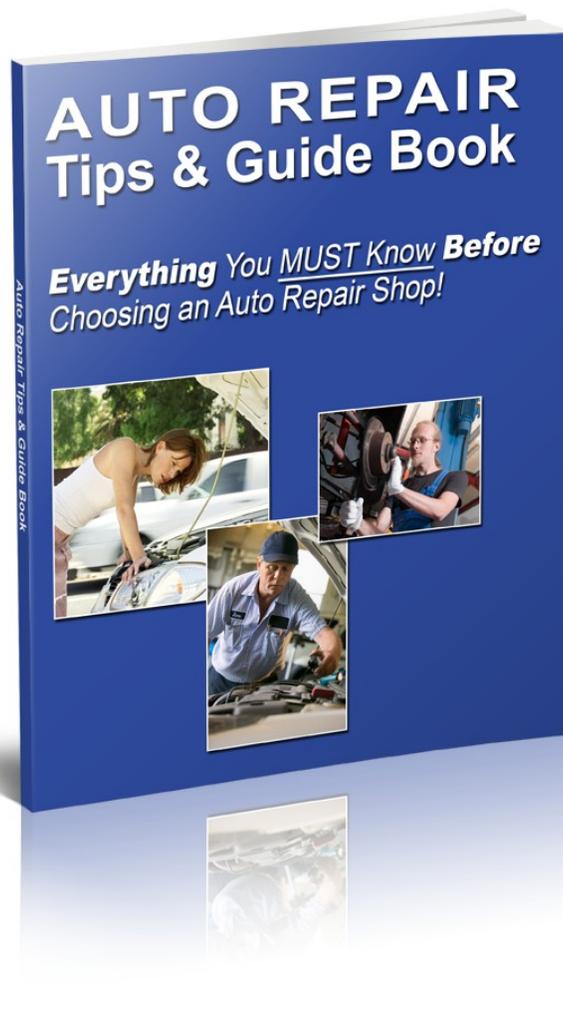


Auto Repair Shop Tips & Guide Book

Everything You **MUST** Know Before
Choosing an Auto Repair Shop



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Introduction

If you drive a vehicle, at some point you're going to need a good auto mechanic. Even if you're not going to have the vehicle for very long, or you simply don't foresee anything going wrong with your car (a very bad assumption to make.) Even if your vehicle never needs repair, which is unlikely, it's still going to need regular maintenance such as oil changes and tune-ups. And you'll need a good auto repair shop to do it.



The industry of automotive repairs is one that has never really had a great reputation. Some mechanics and auto repair shops have been known for running certain scams, to try and squeeze as much money as possible from their customers. Of course this can't be said for all auto repair centers and more mechanics and auto shops are becoming known for being much more honest and upfront than many of their predecessors. Some go so far as to give you guarantees or include policies that show you they are being honest, such as returning any old parts to you when they have been replaced.

But how do you distinguish the honest from the dishonest, or know if a certain mechanic or auto repair center will be able to do a competent job? It can be difficult to know where to begin looking for a good mechanic, and it may seem easier to just take your car down to the big chain down the street from your house. But it is important that you take the time to research different auto repair centers, and that you know a few things about how they work. This will ensure that when you get your car back it's fully repaired and safe to drive, and that you don't end up spending much more than necessary to get the job done.

So how do you find a good auto repair shop?

First Things First

If you purchased your vehicle from a car dealership and something goes wrong with it, you'll probably be tempted to take it into the dealership. This is often the right choice, but it's not always. Car dealerships are notorious for being some of the most expensive places you can take your vehicle to get fixed, but there are also many instances in which it won't cost you a thing to take your car to the dealership.

Always make sure you're aware of the warranty policies on your vehicle. If something goes wrong with it before that warranty is up, you'll definitely want to take it into the dealership because it will still be covered by warranty, and you won't pay for a thing. But there are other good reasons for taking your vehicle into a car dealership too.

One of them is convenience. A private auto repair center may have to order in parts for the specific make and model of your car, whereas the dealership's service center always keeps parts for their cars in stock. They can, because they only need to use certain parts for one certain make, and a handful or two of different models.

You can also be sure that a dealership's automotive technicians will be certified by the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence. While you should always make sure to check that any technician who works on your car is certified, whether it's a dealership or otherwise, the chances are much better that the technicians at the dealership actually are. Dealerships will also usually have someone in the shop that is the 'master technician.' This technician has a lot of experience and is an expert at diagnosing and fixing problems in vehicles.

If you buy your vehicle from a dealership they will also have rights to proprietary information regarding the vehicle for a specified period of time after purchase, usually for one year. This contains information regarding the history of the vehicle, where it came from, and other pertinent information. For the specified period of time, the dealership will be the only one who

has access to that information. This is one reason why you should only take your vehicle to the dealership shortly after purchase.

But, while dealerships are good automotive repair centers, and in some instances the only place you should take your vehicle, there are times when a private auto repair center is a better choice. One of these times is when your vehicle is far past its warranty date. If you haven't had warranty on your car in two or three years, you'll probably save money going to a private repair center rather than a dealership.



It's still important that if you take your vehicle to a private auto repair center that you still ask and make sure that every technician that will work on your car is ASE certified. This is not a certification that is only required by dealerships. There are many great local and neighborhood private automotive repair centers that have a very loyal customer base and will do a great job on your car. If it will serve you better, and save you a couple of bucks, to take your car to a private automotive repair center rather than a dealership, go ahead and do it!

Whether you're going to take your vehicle to a private automotive repair center or a dealership is probably going to be one of the first decisions you make, but it's far from the only one. The next thing you'll have to do is decide on which repair center you're actually going to use. There are a few steps you can follow to make sure that you find the one that's right for you.

Don't Wait Until It's Too Late!

If you wait to find a good mechanic until your brakes desperately need to be fixed, or the muffler falls off your car, it's going to be too late. Once you've reached this point your emotions are involved and you'll do anything to get your car back as soon as possible. There's a problem and you want it fixed, and you just want it fixed now. While this is completely understandable, auto repair centers know that you are in a desperate situation and unfortunately, there are

many that will try and take advantage of that by doing things like up-selling you and charging you for parts that don't need to be replaced.

For this reason, you should always take your vehicle to an automotive repair center *before* anything goes seriously wrong with your car. You're going to feel a whole lot less ripped off if you pay ten dollars more for an oil change than you should have, rather than if you paid hundreds of dollars more for a brake job than you should have. You also won't feel like you wasted too much of your time should you not be happy with the customer service or work of one particular shop. And it will be easily remedied by simply finding another shop for the next time you need something done. Be warned though that when you go to another shop, it should also be for another small job, such as a tune-up.

Word of Mouth Referrals

Having a good mechanic is like having gold, and people are very eager to tell other people when they find a good mechanic. This is because everyone knows how hard it can be to find one! For this reason, the first thing you should do when you're looking for an auto repair center is ask around. Ask your coworkers, friends, family, other parents at your kids' school, and anyone else you know if they know a good mechanic. Don't be worried if you get too many names – you might need to check them all out, and it's always good to have some backup mechanic names on hand too!

Other Places to Add Names to your List

If you find that you don't get enough names simply by asking around you may have to find some more names yourself. One way to do this is to look online for names of local automotive repair centers. Of course you can always check your Yellow Pages to get even more names. Keep in mind when you're gathering these names that you may have to check them out with a bit of a keener eye, as you won't have any personal referrals to back them up before you go.

Going to the Shop for the First Time

So you've found at least one automotive repair center that you think might work for you, and now it's time to visit the shop and see if you really do like it. This is a big visit and you will have to watch and remember everything that happens, as it will determine whether or not you take your vehicle back there for servicing. Chances are you're going to remember you're overall feeling of any one particular automotive repair center, but here are a few things that you should look for, and do.

Read Your Manual Before You Go

There's nothing worse than being asked question after question about your car and not knowing the answers. What is the horsepower? How many cylinders does the engine have? Where are certain parts and pieces located? You will need to know some basic information about your car; and standing there stammering that you don't know anything about it isn't exactly going to make you appear like an expert either. Knowing about your car, and being able to speak competently about it, will make it seem like you know your stuff when it comes to your vehicle, and will make repair centers think twice about wanting to overcharge you for services or parts you don't need.

Once you get to the automotive repair center for the first time....

Look Around

In the case of your new automotive repair center, you can begin by judging a look by its cover. As you drive in, look around. You can tell a lot about how professional the business is by the condition they keep the shop in. As you pull in, look to see if the parking lot is neat and clean. Is there a clear area for you to park? Can you see the other cars that are waiting to be worked on? Are they parked in a logical order, or are they scattered throughout the lot?

Are the lights, the signs and any awnings kept up and in good condition? Or are they broken, ragged, and yellowing? If there's a sign about a big sale in the window and you can tell it's been there for awhile, it's not really a sale, is it? Either that or the sale is long since over and they just haven't bothered to take the sign down. Neither are good indications that it's a business that prides itself in dealing with its customers in a professional manner.

As you go inside the repair shop, keep looking for more indicators of how this service center does business. Can you see into the service bays? Most garages now have clear windows from the waiting area to the service areas, so you can see your vehicle while it's being worked on and check out the condition of the shop. It's bound to be a little dirty, it is the nature of the job, but is it still tidy? Are tools, parts, and equipment put away and properly stored? Are there dirty rags lying all over the floor? Do the technicians have proper uniforms on, or are they wearing whatever dirty work clothes they had at home? Also check to see if the waiting area looks inviting and makes you want to sit while you wait for your car, or its diagnosis.



The appearance of a business should tell you a lot about how the company conducts business with its customers. While you don't have to expect celebrity treatment, the repair shop should show you that they care enough about you to make sure you have a comfortable wait, customer service that makes sure it's taking care of your needs, and that your car will be in a clean and professional environment while it's being worked on. You may not always want to judge a book by its cover but in the case of an automotive repair center, it's not a bad place to start.

Look for Certificates

Cleanliness and tidiness is important in an automotive repair center, but there are things that are even more important that you should look for – and those are certificates. While you're there you may see many certificates hanging on the walls, and this is a good sign. Feel free to take the time to read these certificates fully.

There is only one type of certificate in particular that you should be looking for, and that is the ASE certificates. These certificates are difficult to attain and are considered to be the gold standard among automotive technician certificates. You should make sure that any automotive repair center you work with has this certificate, and that all of their technicians have their own as well.

Other than the ASE certificate, you may see many various certificates on the wall. It's not so much the reason for the certification that's important, although that definitely has its merit too, but the very fact that they're there.

Regular certification means that the shop prides itself on continually updating the knowledge and skills of their technicians, and that they like to stay on top of industry trends. It also shows that they are constantly trying to improve themselves, so they can pass their expertise onto their customers.

Look at Their Equipment

No, you probably won't be able to tell what all those wrenches, pliers, and electric drill-things are. But you can look around to see that the repair center has a great number of tools and equipment to work on your car. If a mechanic can carry everything in a toolbox no bigger than an average tackle box, it's a good indication that they're not properly equipped to do the job.



Good mechanics naturally acquire more tools and equipment the longer they're in business. This is because they simply can't resist the urge to continuously add to their toolbox, and because there are always new jobs cropping up that require specialized tools and equipment.

Don't Think you're Committed Just because you're Already There

When many people visit an automotive repair center, they feel committed as soon as they walk through the door. They feel as though they have already brought their car there, and no matter what the mechanic says, their fate is already sealed. But that's not true! You don't need to do anything, commit to anything, or let them do any work while you're there. If for any reason you feel as though that automotive repair center is not the one for you, tell them 'no thank you' and feel free to find another repair center you feel more comfortable with.

Getting a Price

One of the biggest things that people are worried about when they go into any auto repair shop is the price. For the most part, people are left to trust the mechanic on what they say the price will be. Most people aren't familiar with the price of different parts for different models, or even what parts are needed. And many people aren't even familiar with the different labor fees of different auto repair shops. All of these factors can make it seem overwhelming, and can make people feel very naïve, when it comes to hammering out the price of the job. But don't get overwhelmed by it. Here are a few ways you can make sure that you get the right price for the job with any mechanic.

Get a Quote

This is one reason why it's important to take your vehicle into an automotive repair shop for a small job, rather than a complete overhaul, for the first time. You need to get a quote, and it's much easier to take your vehicle from shop to shop getting quotes for an oil change rather than getting quotes for a starter – in which case you have a vehicle that's not even running.



Of course, if you do have a major problem and don't want to pay the towing charges to take your car from place to place obtaining different quotes, you can still call around to different service centers. Most repair shops base their quotes on the make and model of the car and the type of job that needs to be done. Replacing a battery may be a five-minute task in one car, and need a partial engine removal on another. Mechanics have certain standards and guidelines they go by and they will be able to give you a good estimate over the phone. Of course, they also know their labor costs so these will be included in their quote as well.

Stick to what you're there for

Some mechanics are known for inflating their prices by adding on all kinds of services or new parts that pad the bill, but that aren't really necessary for your car. Make sure that if you're going in for an oil change, you only get a quote for an oil change and nothing else. Be wary of mechanics that try to up-sell you on things like air filters, and that they can show you exactly where your filter is, and how dirty it is before you make a decision. Likewise, if you go in for new brake pads and the mechanic suggests you need new shoes as well, you'll know they're not being honest if you just replaced your brake shoes two months ago. Know your vehicle and the servicing it's had done to it, and no mechanic will be able to run up the price on you.

Remember that Cheaper Doesn't Always Mean Better

When it comes to the servicing your vehicle receives, the quality of the job is the most important thing because it's your safety that's in the mechanic's hands. So while you of course want to get the best price for the job, you also want to make sure that the job is competently done by a qualified mechanic. And different parts and labor do cost certain things, and you can go by general averages. If all the shops on one street charge \$200 for a set of new tires, with the exception of one shop, that only charges \$50 for the same set, you're right to wonder why that is, and how their service is going to reflect that price.

Find Out what Warranty they Offer

Of course you want to make sure that whatever you end up paying for, that you're protected. Make sure you ask what warranty will be offered on the parts and on the labor. After all if you get a new transmission and it breaks a couple of weeks later, you want to be able to take it back to the shop and get a new free transmission – and make sure that you don't pay for the labor charges for the replacement either!

What the Mechanic Should Do For You

You're not the only one who needs to be doing a little bit of work on your first visit to any new automotive repair shop. The mechanic also needs to be doing work to get your business – and they should be doing much more work than you. Here are some of the things the mechanic should do during your first visit.

Make you feel Welcome

When you go to an automotive repair center, whether it's for the first time or the fifth, you want to feel as though they're happy that you came and that they want your business. If they seem put out that you came, or make you feel as though they're too busy to deal with your problems, find another mechanic. The rushed feeling you're getting when you walk in the door will be the same rushed treatment your vehicle receives while it's being repaired.

Give you a Detailed Diagnosis and Breakdown of Costs

Many automotive repair centers will charge a fee for just looking at your car to diagnosis the problem. Just because a mechanic does charge this fee doesn't mean that they're a bad mechanic. But many do offer this service free of charge, and that's good to know when you're comparing different shops.

Of course, you should always be given a full breakdown of what the repairs will cost you, and that's where getting a proper quote comes in. The mechanic should provide you with a full quote covering any and all costs associated with the repair. In some states it is law that any auto repair center charge no more than ten percent of their quoted price but this isn't always the case. Always make sure that you know your rights when it comes to what you should be expected to pay.

Offer Options

When it comes to many repairs, there is more than one solution. Be wary of any mechanic that acts as though their first option is the only option for you. Ask if there are cheaper or remanufactured parts that can be used to save on costs, or if there are cheaper options when it comes to different fuels.

Also don't be afraid to ask your mechanic if you *really* need all of those things done to your car, and if not, what the priorities are. Many mechanics will give you a timeline such as, "You could probably get away with just doing the brakes for today. But I wouldn't let that radiator go any longer than six more months." Statements like this are perfectly fine and show that the mechanic understands that you can't give your vehicle a complete overhaul in one day.

Answer All of your Questions

You're at a mechanic's shop in the first place because well, you're not a mechanic. And as such, you may not know all the terminology, or names for the different parts, what they do, and why you need them. So you should ask questions! Lots of questions! And the mechanic should be more than happy to answer them and again, not treat you as though you – and your questions – are a nuisance.

Let you have the Final Say

Sure, they're the expert. But it's still your car and your pocketbook that will be paying the expense. A mechanic should never make you feel as though they're pushing you to get something done or that you must do it before your car leaves the shop. If you don't feel as though a mechanic is going to give you the final say, walk out the door. And that will be your final say.

After Service

If you're happy with the job that was done once your vehicle has been serviced, make sure to maintain a good relationship with the mechanic. This is one area where using a local, smaller private repair center comes in handy, because they are more likely to remember their individual customers and this helps build a good relationship with them. The better a relationship you have with your mechanic, the better service you're going to receive.

Some of the Most Common Ways Auto Repair Centers Will Rip You Off

As stated earlier, auto repair centers in general have been given a bad name over the past few years. And unfortunately, this isn't completely unwarranted. The disdain that comes when people talk about dishonest mechanics comes from the fact that simply, there are many dishonest mechanics and shops. Luckily, many of their tactics are becoming more well-known to the public and so, it makes it easier to watch out for them and make sure that you're not being taken for every penny that you're worth. Here are some of the most common ways that auto repair centers have been known to rip their customers off.

Advertising Low Prices Only to Overcharge in the End

Also as stated earlier, the ploy where auto repair shops lure you in with big advertisements for even bigger sales, only to add on all kinds of parts and services you don't need, is one of the biggest games in the auto repair industry. Always make sure that if you're there to get a deal that's being advertised, that you get it and that you don't let them talk you into all kinds of extra things your car doesn't even need.

Charging Customers for Parts that Were Never Replaced

Sometimes an auto repair center will simply pad the bill with items that were never taken out or replaced in the car. Things like rotating the tires or other small jobs may be added on and then the customer is left to find out later that this never happened. When possible, always try to make sure you know what your car, and all of its parts, looks like. A very popular trick people now use with tire rotation specifically is to place a piece of masking tap on the inside of one of the front tires. If the rotation was actually done, that tire should be on the back once the job is complete.

Giving Customers Back Old Parts that Aren't Really Theirs

To combat the problem of being charged for parts that were never replaced in their cars, many savvy customers started asking the mechanic for the parts back that were taken out of their car. So if they went in to get their exhaust system replaced, they'd want the entire exhaust system that was taken out of the car returned to them. Unfortunately, some dishonest auto repair shops caught onto this game and started keeping around old parts that they could show or give to customers when they were asked. These parts of course, didn't come from the customers own vehicle but how are they supposed to know that? Nothing you can really do here, except again, know your car and its parts.

Breaking Something Else in the Car While Doing a Job

Sometimes a mechanic will make your experience a wonderful one and not overcharge you or sell you on services and parts that you don't need. But, they may also while they're in there, break something else small in the car so that you need to return and pay more money to have something else fixed. This is one of the sneakiest tricks in the industry there is indeed and you can take heart that very few auto repair shops are this dishonest. But be on the lookout for anything weird happening in your car shortly after service, especially if it happens often.

Questions to Ask Any and All Prospective Auto Repair Centers

- Are you affiliated with the Automotive Service Association (ASA)?
- Do you have an Automotive Services Excellence (ASE) certificate?
- Are your technicians certified?
- Does your service center specialize in any one type of car? Or any one type of work?
- If it was your car, what repairs and services would you have done?
- Is there a diagnostic fee?
- What are your labor rates?
- Do you or your technicians use up-selling as a sales tactic?
- Do you charge a supply fee?
- Can I use used parts if I choose?
- Do I need to give written consent before any work is done on my vehicle?
- Will I get a detailed invoice and explanation of the work that was done to my vehicle?
- Do you supply courtesy cars during the time that my vehicle will be in the shop?
- Do you offer payment plans? What payment options do you accept?
- What kind of warranties and guarantees do you give on your work?
- What happens if something goes wrong with the repair afterward?

Conclusion

Thank you again for downloading this free report. We hope that you found it useful and it has given you the information you need to help you better understand the most important things you should know before you choose the next shop to get your car repaired.

If you would like help finding a top quality car repair shop please contact us at:

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If you know of a dealership we should recommend please contact us today.