

# How to Get Better Automotive Service

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## How to Get Better Automotive Service

Today's cars, light trucks, and sport-utility vehicles are high-tech marvels with digital dashboards, oxygen sensors, electronic computers, unibody construction, and more. They run better, longer, and more efficiently than models of years past.

But when it comes to repairs, some things stay the same. Whatever type of repair facility you patronize--dealership, service station, independent garage, specialty shop, or a national franchise--good communications between customer and shop is vital.

The following tips should help you along the way:

Do your homework before taking your vehicle in for repairs or service.

Today's technician must understand thousands of pages of technical text. Fortunately, your required reading is much less.

- \* Read the owner's manual to learn about the vehicle's systems and components.
- \* Follow the recommended service schedules. Keep a log of all repairs and service.

When you think about it, you know your car better than anyone else. You drive it every day and know how it feels and sounds when everything is right. So don't ignore its warning signals.

Use all of your senses to inspect your car frequently. Check for:

- \* Unusual sounds, odors, drips, leaks, smoke, warning lights, gauge readings.
- \* Changes in acceleration, engine performance, gas mileage, fluid levels.
- \* Worn tires, belts, hoses.
- \* Problems in handling, braking, steering, vibrations.

Note when the problem occurs.

- \* Is it constant or periodic?
- \* When the vehicle is cold or after the engine has warmed up?
- \* At all speeds? Only under acceleration? During braking? When shifting?
- \* When did the problem first start?

Professionally run repair establishments have always recognized the importance of communications in automotive repairs.

Once you are at the repair establishment, communicate your findings.

- \* Be prepared to describe the symptoms. (In larger shops you'll probably speak with a service writer/service manager rather than with the technician directly.)
- \* Carry a written list of the symptoms that you can give to the technician or service manager.
- \* Resist the temptation to suggest a specific course of repair. Just as you would with your physician, tell where it hurts and how long it's been that way, but let the technician diagnose and recommend a remedy.

Stay involved... Ask questions.

- \* Ask as many questions as you need. Do not be embarrassed to request lay definitions.
- \* Don't rush the service writer or technician to make an on-the-spot diagnosis. Ask to be called and apprised of the problem, course of action, and costs before work begins.
- \* Before you leave, be sure you understand all shop policies regarding labor rates, guarantees, and acceptable methods of payment.
- \* Leave a telephone number where you can be called.