

Vehicle Repair Tips

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Use a reliable repair shop, preferably the dealership where you bought your vehicle.

They have the warranty, the parts, the history and mechanics trained to work on your model.

By using your dealership you are placing yourself in a strong position to negotiate should something go wrong and you can avoid the blame game.

If you do not use your dealer for repairs and decide to shop around, get recommendations from friends and colleagues and estimates from more than one shop.

Never base your decision on just the price — a lower price doesn't always mean the best deal. Do your research.

Unless you are absolutely sure what is wrong, describe the symptoms and don't try to diagnose the problem yourself.

Your description should include the location of the problem, its frequency, if it only happens in a specific gear or car function and if it subsides after the vehicle has been running a while.

Be reasonable about time as it may take a while to diagnose the problem.

Also, small jobs that become bigger ones and emergency repairs are challenges that face repair shops every day.

It is better to have a mechanic take the time to do the job properly rather than have him rush and take shortcuts in order to meet your tight deadline.

Do not let work begin on your automobile until you have a detailed written quote and have given your consent.

If the problem cannot be diagnosed right away, insist the shop contact you for authorisation once they find out what the problem is and if they discover more problems once they start working on your car.

Be clear about how long your car will be in the shop.

If they say one day, it should not take a week unless they find additional problems and have advised you.

Some repair shops will have your car sitting all day and not get to it.

They should not let you leave your car if they know they will not have time to repair it.

Maintain communication with your repair shop — if they are going to leave your car sitting you might as well collect it and have transportation until they can get to it.

Ask the repair shop to return any parts that are replaced.

This may be helpful if you need to return to the shop because the repairs were not satisfactory or in the event a dispute arises.

Get all repair warranties in writing and if the repair is covered under warranty, follow the warranty instructions.

Keep copies of all paperwork and maintain accurate service/repair records.

Check all repairs and, if possible, test drive the car or be sure the bill states that a mechanic has made a road test.

If you are dissatisfied with the repair work or feel that you have been treated unfairly, speak to the service manager.

When complaining, keep these tips in mind:

Know your rights. Under the Supply of Services (Implied Terms) Act 2003, work must be completed with reasonable care and skill, within a reasonable time and for a reasonable charge.

Keep a cool head. Be courteous and calm.

Explain the problem accurately and tell the manager what you think would be a fair settlement.

If you are willing to negotiate, say so. In many disputes, neither party is 100 per cent right.

If the problem cannot be resolved to your satisfaction, tell the manager you intend to file a complaint with the office of Consumer Affairs.