

Auto Mechanics Tell-All: Five Mistakes to Avoid on Your Next Trip to the Auto Repair Shop

Expert mechanics reveal common auto repair shop mistakes car owners make

CARSON, Calif., Aug. 24, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- There are common mistakes car owners make when it comes to visiting an [auto repair shop](#) that can quickly turn a good [car repair](#) experience into a bad one, according to a recent AutoMD.com interview with independent repair shop mechanics and input from our team of in-house auto repair experts. AutoMD.com reveals these mistakes while offering additional insider perspective straight from mechanics themselves to help car owners make the best of their next auto repair shop visit.

Top Five Auto Repair Shop Mistakes Car Owners Make according to [AutoMD.com](#)

Mistake #1: Failing to communicate properly

According to the mechanics interviewed by AutoMD.com, the better you're able to communicate your car's symptoms, the easier it is for the mechanic to diagnose and fix the problem. Write down what you hear, feel, see, and smell before you arrive and keep a log of exactly when the symptoms occur (when you're braking or when you're driving over a certain speed, for example). Also, note the location and frequency of the symptoms, and if any repairs were done on the vehicle recently. Many times a problem is related to the last repair.

Before you arrive, refer to the AutoMD.com [Diagnose Car Problem](#) page for a road map of questions your mechanic might ask as well as assistance to help you troubleshoot the problem(s) yourself.

Mistake #2: Setting unrealistic expectations

We spoke with a mechanic from the Greater Boston, Massachusetts area who has over 20 years of experience and who told us: "I've had customers schedule a vehicle inspection on the same day they are leaving on a family trip. If we find the car needs brakes, we try to accommodate them the best we can but some customers expect us to fix their car in an hour, not realizing how long the job actually takes or the other customers that we are also trying to accommodate."

Even if it's a relatively quick and easy repair job, understand your car may be at the end of a long list of cars needing repairs. Ask how long the job may take and be prepared to have a ride to and from the shop. Be mindful of the fact that your mechanic may need extra time to get the job done, and to get it done right.

Mistake #3: Dropping off a dirty or loaded vehicle

Contrary to popular belief, most mechanics like to work in a clean environment, and that includes the vehicle they are working on. Clean your car before you take it to the shop. Your mechanic will appreciate it, and you never know, it may affect the service you receive. The mechanic in Boston we spoke to said, "Cars and trucks with many items left in the back like strollers, golf clubs, construction materials, tools, etc. can affect vehicle performance and make some repairs more difficult to do. Sometimes we have to remove these items to get to the failed part, perform a specific repair like a wheel alignment, or even put it on a lift!"

Be sure to save your mechanic and yourself valuable time by cleaning out your car before you visit the repair shop.

Mistake #4: Making yourself unavailable

Good repair shops are extremely busy and coordinating all the jobs to maximize the day can be difficult. If the mechanic or service writer is unable to contact you to authorize a repair, the vehicle sits. Make sure the contact numbers you leave are correct and you respond promptly.

Remember, a cooperative, friendly and respectful attitude is usually always reciprocated.

Mistake #5: Hovering over the mechanic

Virtually every mechanic interviewed by AutoMD.com expressed concern for customers hovering while they work. "I once had a customer who watched me like a hawk and followed my every move," said a 20-year mechanic from Westminster, California. "If I bent down, he bent down, if I went right, he went right. Finally, I went to the other side of the car and when he peered over, I humorously said 'peek-a-boo'." I don't mind customers watching, but it's extremely distracting and can actually inhibit me from doing my job properly."

While it's appropriate to stand with your mechanic while explaining the problem, it's inappropriate, distracting and sometimes downright dangerous to hover over him/her while he/she works. Stand back and let your mechanic do his/her job.

Important Auto Repair Statistics

This behind-the-scenes look at auto repair shop pitfalls comes at a critical time when car owners are generally disenchanted with the auto repair shop experience – this despite the fact that Americans are driving their cars more than ever before (Americans logged nearly three trillion vehicle miles in 2010, the most since 2007(1)) or that independent repair shops continue to garner higher marks for satisfaction than car dealers when it comes to repairs, according to a June 2011 survey by Consumer Reports(2).

Consider the following statistics:

- A recent AutoMD.com survey reveals only 17 percent of people say they have no fear when visiting a mechanic.(3)
- Over 50 percent of the people surveyed by AutoMD.com say they fear all of the following things: being overcharged, more repairs being done than needed, and their vehicles not being fixed correctly. (3)

- An astounding 86 percent of those surveyed say they believe they have been overcharged when getting repairs. (3)

(1) Consumer Reports, Americans drove nearly 3,000,000,000,000 miles in 2010, March 3, 2011: <http://news.consumerreports.org/cars/2011/03/americans-drove-nearly-3-trillion-miles-in-2010-us-dot-traffic-levels-highest.html>.

(2) Consumer Reports magazine: June 2011, Owners prefer independent shops: <http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine-archive/2011/june/cars/car-maintenance/overview/index.htm>

(3) AutoMD.com Mileage Survey, Q1 2011

About AutoMD.com

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