How To Get Your Vehicle Fixed - Without Getting *Ripped Off*!

Avoid Being Taken Advantage Of - And Get Back On The Road *Sooner* & For Less.

Your car or truck is such an important part of your life. It’s difficult--if not impossible--to do anything if you can’t get around these days.

So if your vehicle is in need of repairs, refer to this guide to help you avoid being ripped off by shady vendors and manipulative repair shops.

These tips will SAVE YOU THOUSANDS of dollars and help you to get back on the road sooner **and** safer!
STEP 1:

Choose the Appropriate Course of Action for Your Vehicle Based On Its Value

What is the approximate blue book value of your car or truck in its current state? The answer is based on a few different variables.

We always tell customers to think about what the value of there car is to THEM and not the valuation guides.

If your car is rusting in half with bad brakes, tires, a worn out interior, etc. - then fixing it may not be the best answer for you.

On the other hand, if your car is clean and has had a lot of expensive work (e.g. new tires, new brakes, new shocks, a new transmission, or engine) then keeping/repairing it probably makes more sense for you (as opposed to buying another used car, since you already know its history).

Repairing your existing vehicle might also be a better choice than taking on a new car loan for $20-$60K.

I encourage you to pull out your receipts and tally up the repair costs, then write down the PROS and CONS of “buying” versus “repairing” on a piece of paper. Seeing it all on paper will help the decision become more clear.

Once you do this, you’ll know how much it’s worth to spend on your repairs (or if it’s even worth it at all). Quite often, the cost of parts and labor for an engine or transmission replacement exceeds the value of the car. But it rarely exceeds the cost to replace a car.

Using these tips will help you to develop a clear picture of what the right decision is for your car and your family.

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STEP 2:

Choose The Appropriate Replacement Product(s) For Your Vehicle

Once you have determined that repairing your vehicle is best course of action for your situation, the next step is to decide which grade of product is best for you.

**Dealer Repairs**

The first (and most expensive option) is to take it to the dealer. Depending on your vehicle’s year, this may not be an option at all.

Many times, dealers can only provide repair options for cars that are less than 10 years old. In fact, the older the car or truck, the more likely it is that they are selling you an aftermarket part (from someone like us) and marking up the price.

The PRO to buying from a dealer is that you generally can take the car to any dealer (anywhere) for repairs. The CON is that many of them have hidden warranty limitations or cost-caps that you don't always know about until you need them (so make sure you read and understand the fine print).

**Remanufactured Parts**

The next option is using remanufactured parts.

A properly remanufactured item, in most cases, will exceed the useful life of a vehicle (IF it is maintained properly). They also typically come with much more comprehensive and flexible warranties then dealers provide and at a fraction of the cost.

Properly remanufactured products, like the ones we offer, have all of the factory flaws corrected so that they don't happen again. In most cases, an
aftermarket remanufactured piece is built better than a dealer item and costs $1-$2K less.

**Used Parts**

Used parts can also be a very good option to repairing your car.

Used parts are almost always the cheapest option. When purchased from a reputable supplier that tests them properly, used parts can provide as much longevity as the options listed above.

The key with buying a used product is to understand the process in which a used item is tested and removed. Buying the cheapest used parts can be risky because they are usually not from good vehicles, and typically aren’t tested properly.

For example, many salvage yards today will simply lift the vehicle up and use a cutting torch to remove the engine and transmission. Once out, they cut all the wiring and separate the engine from the transmission. Selling it to you “as is.”

**These are the used products you want to avoid:**

**Cut out, not tested, & not run** - means you will probably be buying another replacement in 90 days after their substandard warranty runs out.

On the other hand, with our used products, we only sell items from wrecked cars that we can **run and test**. If we can’t start an engine to test it, we use it to rebuild as a core.
On top of that, we properly remove all of our drivetrain components by unplugging the wiring and unbolting the parts (*not a cut and hack job*) and thoroughly compression-test everything.

If you choose to go with used parts, be sure to investigate the supplier and ask questions. After calling a few options you will get the feel for who is telling you the truth about their process and who is telling you what you want to hear--only to sell a product.

**STEP 3: Choose A Quality Installation Facility**

Our customers often ask us where to get their vehicles repaired. Our answer has always been that we do not recommend specific shops.

The reason for this is because, although **we guarantee the quality of our own products**, it is impossible for us to guarantee the competency, experience, or integrity of every repair shop.
With that said, here are two cardinal rules that have served our customers well over the years. Nothing is perfect, but these are pretty good. ;-)

**Is The Shop “Clean?”**

*Cleanliness of the shop* - this is the most important thing to look for. If the shop is not clean, it means that they don’t take pride in it. If they don’t take pride in their own shop, it’s a tell tale sign that they won’t take pride in your engine replacement either!

By “clean” we mean organized, free of junk and old car parts laying around, grease stains on the building, sloppy parking lots, and other unprofessional elements.

We tell customers to walk past the bay doors before going inside. Are the technicians wearing uniforms? Uniforms are a sign of professionalism and shows that management at least cares about making a good appearance.

A clean waiting room/lobby that is organized and inviting is another strong signal that speaks to the professionalism of the store.

**Do They Specialize In Engine & Transmission Replacement?**

Talk to the front counter at the shop and ask them if they install engines and transmissions on a regular basis. If the answer is not a definitive “YES,” it means that they DO NOT specialize in this.

Many mechanics mistakenly assume that because they specialize in brake work that they can install an engine properly as well.

You are far better served by researching other shops that DO specialize in engine replacements, so take the time to look and ask questions.

Applying these rules to shopping for a repair facility will almost always net you professional results. The bottom line is if it looks like they care about their business, then they are more likely to care about your vehicle and the quality of repair it receives.
Is A Car Dealership The Best Option For Repairs?

The answer to this question is generally, “No.” Dealerships typically charge 30% - 40% more per hour than their independent counterparts.

This is not to say that all dealerships are inappropriate for this level of service. But consider that dealer service writers are very similar to car salesmen, in that, they are in the business of selling you repair services.

They are trained to get as much money from you as possible.

We’ve had hundreds of our customers tell us stories of taking their vehicle to a dealership for “routine maintenance,” only to be told they need a major repairs.

A good rule of thumb with dealers is, if you have a long standing relationship with them and feel they are honest, then they probably are. Otherwise, find a repair shop that specializes in these kinds of repairs.

STEP 4:

Warranties and Fees

Understand the Warranty from the Supplier and the Installer

We have all heard it: “Read the fine print.” That lesson is particularly true when buying an engine or transmission.

Warranties are not always what they appear to be. The common misconception is that a remanufactured or used engine warranty covers everything at no additional cost to the consumer, but this is usually quite the opposite.
We have always made our warranty available online to be reviewed by our customers.

However, many suppliers do not make their warranties readily available, and there is usually a reason for this.

These are common examples of what you will find in these less than friendly warranties:

- **Hidden Labor Caps**

  *They will only guarantee replacement labor up to a certain dollar amount.*

- **Pro-Rating**

  *They reduce your coverage as time goes on.*

- **Forced removal and return of products**

  *You are required to have your engine or transmission removed and shipped back to them, before your warranty repair is made.*

Being aware of terms like this will help you to avoid losing your investment to a less than supportive warranty in the event that your new engine or product fails for any reason.

Because if on day one, your mechanic installs the item and there is a problem, you are stuck with that warranty and how it is administered. Also it is imperative to understand who administers the warranty.

Many suppliers are simply resellers and if you have a claim they dump you off on their supplier, who quite frankly could care less if you, the customer, are taken care of. When considering a supplier, call them separately and ask to talk to the warranty department and ask them some of these questions.

You will get a quick view of what you will have to contend with if there is a problem. And unfortunately, that is a possibility when replacing something as complex as an engine or transmission.
STEP 5:

Maintenance

Understand What Your Responsibilities Will Be as a Vehicle Owner to Insure Your Product is Long Lasting

Maintenance. This is key. You need to make sure to maintain your new product. Oil changes are typically required on a new engine at 500 miles and then every 3,000 miles thereafter. The misconception that the OEM manufacturers have cast about being able to run 7,500 miles between oil changes on synthetic is simply not true.

Yes, engines are built better and, yes, oil holds longer, BUT the amount of carbon and dirt entering an engine over a 7,500 mile period has never changed. And for that reason, our advice has always been to run conventional oil, save the money, and change it more often.

Also, DON’T ignore your check engine light. It is there to prevent problems and people have gotten into the habit of ignoring them.

Yes, there are instances where a check engine light can be on for a year and mean nothing, but at the same time it can mean the end of your engine in 20 minutes.

Don’t ignore them. Get them checked out ASAP when they pop on.
Understanding a Core Charge and What to Look Out for

Core charges are a very confusing thing for consumers to understand. To try and explain it simply, think of the remanufacturing process as recycling. We take and old engine or transmission and make it new again. Then when that cycle is done, we need the old one back so we can do it again.

The core charge is a fee imposed to insure that the old product is returned. Now, we don’t charge these upfront, and we allow our customers 30 days to get the job done and their core returned before having to pay. But not everyone works this way. Many don’t place the trust in their customers like we do, and they make you pay upfront.

Also, many that do charge upfront will charge back for miscellaneous fees on things like the core not being drained of fluid, or maybe missing a small part and then charge half of the core fee.

Make sure you understand the core policies. Also, if your engine stopped running altogether, make sure you know if there is internal damage to it. Internal damage may mean your core is not rebuildable and therefore a fee may be imposed. Just remember, part of selling the product to you at the price it is sold at is that the core can be reused. IF it can't, then the product has to cost you more, thus the core charge.

Understand the Labor Game that Shops Will Play

When you get anything done in a repair shop, you are quoted the job by the shop using a labor guide as a reference. This is a guide that is published and updated constantly to give mechanics an idea of how long it takes to do a certain job. Now, you as a consumer would assume, “Okay, that is fair.

A group of skilled individuals got together and said it takes one hour to replace part A, B, and C. Therefore, the shop will charge me that amount.” But understand a few things.

...When I was in my early days of being taught mechanics, I was working for Ford and they had what was called the SIP program (Service Improvement Program). The goal behind this was to do away with FLAT
RATES and make sure the customer got the level of work they deserved. It was a great idea that flopped because of one thing: FLAT RATES!

A flat rate is the rate a shop charges you and where most mechanics make their big money. For example, if it takes five hours to replace your transmission, the service writer tells you it takes five hours and the cost will be XYZ. Now the goal of that mechanic is to do the job as fast as possible.

“Why, if he has 5 hours to do it?” you may ask. The reason is flat rate. If the mechanic does the job in, say, in three hours, he still gets paid the five hours to do it. Why? Because you paid 5 hours.

The goal of all mechanics when I was coming up was to turn 150%, or in other words, if they worked 10 hours, they get paid for 15. I bet you’re ready to be a mechanic now, huh? How many professions out there pay you for hours you did not really work?

I commend Ford for trying to do away with this in the 90s. I also realized when the mechanics weren't going to let it go, that being a mechanic was not for me.

Now, not paying flat rate is not an option in most shops. They are going to charge you the rate they quoted, and in my book that is okay. But where I have an issue is when I hear customers come back and say the job took an extra four hours than they were quoted. WELL, this is circumventing what flat rate is all about. IF you have the chance to make 150% on your time then if you actually make 50% on your time that is the gamble you take on Mr. or Mrs. Mechanic.

Get a written quote and ask them what if anything could change it. Get it in writing and tell them you expect them to honor their price. And for the record, I don’t want to get you completely down. There are thousands of shops that do what they quote and stand behind their work. It is just important to understand the game.
Understanding How To NOT Void Your Warranty

A common misconception of vehicle owners is “Well, I have a warranty so it doesn’t matter if I drive it until it quits.” That’s right, everyone. The top 90% of this post has been running the industry through the mud. Now it’s your turn. You the customer bare a hefty responsibility, too.

I have seen thousands of engines that were built properly, destroyed because a customer had a thermostat go bad and they drove the engine so hot, it locks up. Or the check engine light came on two weeks ago for an oxygen sensor. It gets ignored and it wastes four cylinders.

Understand that as remanufacturers, we do everything in our capacity to produce a product that is perfect. Yes, we make mistakes and when it happens, at least my company will always stand up for them. But it is important to understand that this is your car and you are the eyes and ears that protect your investment.

Don’t ignore the telltale signs that could prevent a failure. IF something isn’t right, then it isn’t right. Discontinue the use of the vehicle immediately and get it fixed. I hate to have a conversation with a customer that just spent $5K and ignored a check engine light which cost them an engine and now they have to spend it again.

The vehicles of today are more advanced than ever and will help prevent so many things. Pay attention to them and allow them to do so. Doing this, it is possible to see 5,10, or even 20 years of service out of your new engine or transmission.
In closing, I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this report. I have put this together with my 20 years of experience in the drivetrain industry and whether you decide to shop with us or another business, I hope it helps you to make an educated decision. And the most important thing is that you get back on the road!

Sincerely,

Eddie

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