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Ask Six Simple Questions To Select The Right Auto Repair Shop

(NAPS) - By asking six simple questions, you may be better able to identify the right auto repair shop to properly care for one of your most valuable assets, your car.

WHAT TO ASK:

1. Does the business employ ASE-certified technicians? Credentials and affiliations are indicators of professionalism and the management's commitment to training and education.

2. Is the shop and customer waiting area clean and organized? Cleanliness and organization are signs of a well-run business.

3. Are customers greeted and treated in a friendly and respectful manner? Many auto repair businesses excel in the area of customer service and satisfaction. A simple phone call to the shop to inquire about their services can give you a glimpse of how they treat customers.

4. Does the business provide a written estimate? The business should complete a written estimate and request your signature prior to starting any repairs on your car.

5. Does the business offer a warranty? Most auto repair businesses offer a warranty on parts and labor and the warranty is usually in writing or posted in the waiting area.

6. Does the business have a list of satisfied customers or references that it is willing to give you? Satisfied customers and recommendations from family, friends and neighbors are helpful in finding a good shop. Many auto repair facilities also have company websites that are worth checking out as they often include testimonials and additional information about the business.

"A vehicle is a major purchase for most people, so it makes sense to take the time to select an auto repair facility that will take the best care of that investment," said Rich White, executive director of the non-profit Car Care Council. "Being an informed auto care consumer means not only learning about your vehicle and its service needs, but also the facility that will make the repairs."

A Car Care Council video, titled "Auto Service and Repair: What to Expect," provides valuable information on such topics as what to expect at the shop and covers the real truth about consumer rights and the manufacturer's warranty.

The Car Care Council is the source of information for the "Be Car Care Aware" consumer education campaign promoting the benefits of regular vehicle care, maintenance and repair to consumers.

LEARN MORE
To order a free copy of the popular "Car Care Guide," visit the council's consumer education website at www.carcare.org. It may pay to find out a few facts before you let anyone work on your car.



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Erie Insurance received the highest numerical score in the J.D. Power 2013-2018 U.S. Insurance Shopping Studies 2018 study based on 15,689 total responses, evaluating 20 providers, and measures the experiences and perceptions of customers surveyed between April 2017 to January 2018. Your experiences may vary. Visit jdpower.com.
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Factors That Impact Auto Insurance Premiums

Auto insurance rates vary from person to person, even though it may seem like the offerings are the same. But no two drivers are the same, and certain factors may be affecting drivers' auto insurance premiums without the motorists even realizing it. Automotive insurance provider State Farm says most insurance companies consider several factors when calculating the cost of car insurance. Recognizing which situations can increase or lower costs can help drivers get the best rates and coverage needed. Although it can be tempting to reduce the price of insurance by choosing lower amounts of coverage, there are other ways to make insurance more affordable.

- Move. Insurers typically look at where a person lives when calculating rates. Those people who live in highly populated, urban areas likely will have higher premiums than others who live in more rural towns. That's because greater population density often translates into more people on the road, and a greater chance for insurance claims due to fender benders or theft. By moving, a person may be able to cut rates.
- Gender and age are factors. One can't step into a time machine, but it's helpful to know that growing a little older can lower insurance premiums. The financial advice source Money Crashers say that young men usually incur higher rates than young women because statistically men get into more accidents. However, as a person moves into his or her senior years, the roles reverse. Older women may see higher rates than men the same age.
- Keep make and model in mind. The type of vehicle driven can affect insurance premiums. Certain insurance carriers will increase premiums on vehicles that are more sus-



ceptible to damage. Flashy sports cars or those that do not score as highly on vehicle safety ratings calculated by industry experts may result in high premiums. Vehicles that are desirable to car thieves also may cost more to insure. Researching vehicles prior to purchase and checking the rates for those cars or trucks with insurance companies can help keep costs low.

- Commuters may pay more. Individuals who use a car for business or frequent commuting may pay more than people who drive less because statistically there is a greater risk for an accident, says State Farm. Reducing commute times can lower premiums.
- Tie the knot. Insure.com says married couples have been found to be less of a risk to insurance providers statisti-

cally than those who are single. A study by the National Institutes of Health found that single drivers were twice as likely to be in an auto accident as married drivers. Combining policies also can help married people save.

- Follow the rules of the road. Drivers who have moving violations, drink and drive or engage in otherwise risky behavior behind the wheel may see their rates soar. Insurance companies weigh factors such as driving record, age, locality, and more when assessing premium costs. Drivers have some room to get lower rates by knowing the factors that determine their premiums.

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Maintain Tire Balance And Alignment For A Smooth Ride

It is easy for motorists to take their tires for granted when everything is working correctly. Wheels and suspension systems bear the weight of cars and trucks and must bear the brunt of rough roads, potholes and any additional obstacles, so some wear and tear is to be expected. Many drivers know to monitor their tire pressure, but it's also important to check for worn treads and inspect tires for punctures or damage. Proper tire alignment and balance also is essential for a comfortable and smooth ride.

BALANCE: Balancing tires involves equalizing the weight of the combined tire and wheel assembly so that each tire spins smoothly on the road. Tires are mounted on the wheel assembly, and the chances of this assembly having precise weight distribution is nearly impossible without a little help. According to Discount Tire, the slightest imbalance in the tires, even as little as half an ounce, can be felt by drivers.

Unequal mass can make tires wobble, causing noticeable vibrations. Mechanics will test tire balance by putting it on a balancing machine. The machine will spin the tire and determine the tire's heaviest point. Counteracting weights will be placed on the tire hubs to create a more uniform balance of weight. Lead weights are often used, but some are being phased out for other metals, such as zinc, because of the medical and environmental implications of lead.

Tires that are not balanced will not only cause vibration, they also can lead to uneven wear.

ALIGNMENT: Tire alignment is another way to reduce wear on tires and help avoid steering and "pulling" problems. Bridgestone Tires defines tire alignment as an adjustment of the vehicle's suspension, or the system that connects a vehicle to its wheels.

When tires are not properly aligned, drivers may notice uneven tread wear. Misaligned tires also may cause the vehicle to pull to the left or right. Drivers who notice their steering wheel is off-center or vibrating when they are driving may need to adjust their tires' alignment. Camber, or the inward or outward angle of the tire when viewed from the front of the vehicle, will be adjusted. In addition, "toe," or the extent to which the tires turn inward or outward when viewed from above, will be adjusted. Caster angle also helps balance steering, stability and cornering. Caster is the angle of your steering axis when viewed from the side of your vehicle.

When tires are balanced correctly and aligned, vehicles will offer a smooth ride with little to no vibrations. Having tires serviced can maximize their performance and lifespan.

Tire balance is checked on a machine that will measure heavy spots. Technicians will apply weights to the tires to balance any inconsistencies in weight.

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The Basics Of Driving With Trailers In Tow

Active adults and busy families understand that one perk to owning a pickup truck or an SUV is the ability to tow items behind the vehicle. Many of these trucks already come equipped with trailer hitches that make it possible to tow boats, RVs, snowmobiles and more. But safe and successful towing requires knowledge of the basics of hitching a trailer and some special rules of the road. The following are a few safety tips for drivers unaccustomed to towing.

- Know your vehicle's tow weight capacity. The owner's manual will list the maximum weight a vehicle can tow safely, but this is just a simplified estimation of data. To tow successfully, it's important to know your vehicle's gross combined weight rating, or GCWR. This includes the vehicle itself, its passengers and cargo, as well as the trailer and the trailer's cargo. More passengers on board reduces the amount of weight you can pull. Another weight factor is the tongue weight, or how much of the trailer's weight rests on the hitch, which should be around 10 percent of the trailer's weight. This helps reduce trailer sway and can improve steering.
- Practice proper weight distribution. Distribute the weight of the item being towed to make towing smoother and safer. The cargo's center of gravity should be low, and most of the weight should be toward the front. Weight on either side also should be even. These steps will help prevent the trailer from fishtailing or flipping over.
- Use the right hitch equipment. Adjust the hitch so that the trailer being towed is relatively level to your vehicle when attached. Connect lights to your trailer through the hitch system so that brake lights and other indicators work properly. Make sure the hitch ball is the right size for your trailer, otherwise the trailer might disconnect during towing. Use a pin and safety chains to keep the trailer secure.
- Check if extra brakes are required. Many states require a separate braking system on towed vehicles with a loaded weight in excess of 1,000 pounds. Newer trucks may have a built-in controller for brakes or you may need to have a system installed. Experts from Popular Mechanics advise using a trailer brake output system that matches the trailer brake output to the tow vehicle's deceleration.
- Slow down and drive more cautiously. A vehicle towing a trailer will not maneuver the same way as a vehicle without a trailer attached. Give yourself a greater cushion of space between other vehicles. It may take longer for you to brake because of the added weight. Get used to using side-view mirrors because the trailer may block your rearview. Larger, extended side-view mirrors may help you feel more comfortable and safe. Make wide turns so that the trailer will clear curbs and not tip over.
- Avoid backing up. Unless you're experienced with driving large rigs, you may find reversing with a trailer very challenging. Limit situations that require backing up. Park in pull-through parking spots when possible. If you need to back up, move slowly and with your hand on the bottom of the steering wheel, turning it in the direction you want the trailer to go.
- Practice, practice, practice. Get acclimated with towing in a parking lot or on empty streets before taking your trailer out on the open road.



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Many drivers have experienced the misfortune of getting into their vehicles only to realize their engines won't turn over. Although there may be plenty of reasons why a car will not start, quite frequently a dead battery is to blame. Car batteries can last for five years or more when properly cared for, but many batteries wear down and become inefficient within three years of daily use. According to the UK-based company Warranty Wise, car batteries deteriorate with every charge from a vehicle's engine. Naturally, drivers who are stranded by dead batteries wish they had done more to prevent their battery dying while they're on the road. Certain factors might offer clues as to how much life vehicle batteries have left.

- Longer start time: A dying battery may cause the engine to crank, but it can be slow to start or not seem to exude a lot of power.
- Cranks but doesn't start: You may turn the key to hear the engine trying to turn over, but it won't. Even if the vehicle eventually starts, have the battery checked and, if necessary, replaced by a mechanic.
- A jump start has been necessary: Batteries that have required a jump or multiple jumps are on their last legs and should be replaced immediately.
- Dim lights or check engine indicator: Batteries powers the electric components in a vehicle, so dim lights could be indicative of a loss of power. Having the "check engine" light come on also can be a clue.
- Extreme temperatures: According to Firestone, hot or cold temperatures can shorten a battery's life. If you live in an extreme climate, your battery may not last as long as the manufacturer suggests it should.
- Short driving trips: People who take many short trips (less than 20 minutes each) may find their batteries do not have enough time to fully recharge, shortening their life expectancy.
- Pungent aroma: Leaking and corrosion around the battery terminals can cause battery issues. If there is a rotten egg smell under the hood, it may be a leaking battery on its way to dying. Drivers can have their vehicle batteries tested by mechanics. Batteries can be replaced at home or at a garage. Servicing the vehicle frequently can prevent performance inefficiencies and help determine if any components are straining the battery and causing premature loss of battery life.



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Warm weather is synonymous with many things, including summer vacations. But for auto enthusiasts, spring, summer and even early fall would not be the same without road trips. Road trips often instill a spirit of rejuvenation in drivers and their { Vehicle touchups were once a realm reserved specifically for mechanics or the most ardent auto enthusiasts. But nowadays even weekend warriors can address the minor dings, chips and scratches on their vehicles, saving them both time and money.

- Crack the color code. One of the fears novices commonly have when touching up their vehicles is that they won't find the exact match with regard to their vehicle's exterior color. The key to the perfect color match is contained in the vehicle's color code, which can be found somewhere on the vehicle, most often on the inside of the driver's side door. Consult your owner's manual or call the vehicle manufacturer if you cannot find the color code on your vehicle. Once you find the code, you can then order your color. Employing the most extensive library of OEM colors in the industry, AutomotiveTouchupTM makes it as simple as ever for drivers to create and order the exact colors to touch up their vehicles' exteriors. Paints are created per order during a

simple, three-step online ordering process using a vehicle's specific color code, make, model and year, and orders are shipped directly to consumers, saving them from making a trip to the often intimidating automotive supply store. The result is drivers rest easy with the knowledge that they aren't ordering and subsequently applying the incorrect color to their car or truck.

- Use the right application tool. Dings, chips and cracks come in many shapes and sizes, and the appropriate touchup tool will depend on the type and size of the blemish. Small chips and nicks and thin scratches are best addressed with pens, while you might need a small bottle of clearcoat to address slightly larger areas. Use an aerosol spray can to address areas that have experienced extensive damage. When applying the paint, use several light coats rather than one heavy coat. Drivers concerned about their application abilities can visit the AutomotiveTouchup website to access a library of educational videos that illustrate how to use the various application tools. Visitors to the website also can speak directly with a team of advisors who can walk them through their projects.
- Recognize that practice makes per-

fect. Even if you are confident you purchased the right paint, it's still best to practice using your touchup paint prior to applying the paint to your vehicle. Use a glossy sheet of paper or metal can as a practice surface, and then hold that practice surface up next to your vehicle to confirm your choice and calm any lingering nerves you may have about the paint match.

- Paint in the right conditions. Before applying any paint, thoroughly clean the affected areas. A simple formula of dish soap and water should do the trick, but be sure to allow the area to dry completely before continuing. When using aerosol cans, the ideal temperature to spray is between 70°F and 80°F and humidity {
- Allow the paint time to dry. Drying times vary depending on the temperature. Paints may take longer to dry when temperatures are below 70°F than they will when the weather is warmer. Once the application process is complete, do not wax the vehicle for 30 days.

Few vehicles make it through road trip season without a scratch or two, and now drivers can quickly and affordably address those chips and nicks on their own in a matter of minutes.

A collage of automotive repair-related images. At the top left is a circular logo containing a white wrench. To its right is the text 'LYON VALLEY GARAGE INC' in large, bold, black letters, with 'Auto and Truck Repair' in smaller black letters below it. On the left side, there is a list of services: '- PA Inspections', '- PA Emissions', '- General Repairs', and '- Detailing'. Below this list is the text 'Local Shuttle Service Available'. In the center is a large, bold, black phone number '484-217-1000'. At the bottom, the address '3843 PA Route 100, New Tripoli, PA 18066' and the owners' names 'Kerry Kehl & Susan Tophoney, owners' are listed. On the right side, there is a detailed illustration of a car's engine and a cluster of interlocking gears.

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4 Reasons For A Check Engine Light

Vehicles rely on many components working harmoniously to function at optimal capacity. Any number of systems can go wrong, and oftentimes the first indication that something has gone awry is an illuminated dashboard signal. One such signal is the “check engine” light. Many drivers have little idea what to do when this indicator lights up, and this light can cause some anxiety. According to Consumer Reports, a check engine light turning on does not usually require immediate action. However, it does mean that you should make an appointment to have the vehicle inspected for potential problems. Check engine lights are part of a car’s onboard diagnostics. The light turning on may indicate something minor, such as a loose fuel cap, or something more serious like a misfiring engine. When the light turns on, drivers wondering why may want to see if the answer is related to one of the following issues.

1. Loose gas cap: Fuel vapors can leak out and air can get in when the fuel cap isn't secured correctly. This can compromise the fuel system and make the check engine light come on. Take off the cap and then reseal it to see if that alleviates the problem. Cracked caps will need to be replaced.
2. Dirty oxygen sensor: A faulty or clogged sensor may not provide the right information about unburned oxygen from the vehicle’s exhaust. This sensor monitors how much fuel is burned. Compromised data can cause a decrease in fuel efficiency. Some do-it-yourselfers can replace an oxygen sensor on their own, but those who can't should have the issue addressed immediately by a professional.
3. Too much speed or load: Towing a trailer or another heavy item may put strain on the vehicle and cause the light

to come on because of loss of power. Lightening the load and reducing speed can help fix the problem. Always consult with the owner's manual to determine the towing capacity of your vehicle.

4. Short or faulty code: Computers aren't always fool-proof, and sometimes an electrical short or another similar problem can cause a light to come on. Bring the vehicle to an automotive supply store. Such stores typically have diagnostics tools that can be hooked into the car's computer and provide a more detailed understanding of what is triggering the check engine indicator.

In many cases, a steady check engine light is not a serious concern. However, when such a light comes on, drivers should try to find out why as soon as possible.

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the expense and inconvenience of getting it replaced all over again.

HOW ELSE CAN DRIVERS IMPROVE VISIBILITY?

In addition to properly maintaining their headlights, drivers can take the following proactive measures to make nighttime driving safer.

- Replace worn out wiper blades each season or in three-month intervals to ensure adequate visibility during rain or snow.
- Clean interior glass and mirrors to remove any film-like buildup that reduces vision and creates hazy reflections from the sun. This is especially important for smokers who smoke while driving.
- Don't hang accessories on rearview mirrors. This includes fuzzy dice, photos and other items that can be distracting and block your vision.

To learn more, check out the public service website and video produced by Lumileds at: philipsautolighting.com/chips.

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Why Clean Air Filters Are Important

Vehicle owners likely know to check fluid levels and get their cars' oil changed, but air filters may not be at the top of their maintenance checklists. Despite being a relatively inexpensive part, air filters often go overlooked. Air filters have an important job in a vehicle, prolonging the life span of engines and helping cars run more smoothly and efficiently. PURPOSE OF VEHICLE AIR FILTERS Vehicle combustion engines operate with a mixture of fuel and air. Without oxygen, gasoline or diesel fuels cannot burn properly and power the engine. The air filter's job is to prevent dirt, dust and other debris from being sucked into an engine. Otherwise, grime can build up and impede engine performance or cause erosion of parts under the hood. It is much more cost-effective to routinely change air filters than



replace expensive engine parts. Rather than ignoring air filters until the last minute, drivers can take steps to keep filters clean and functioning at peak performance. • IMPROVE FUEL EFFICIENCY. Clogged air filters reduce air flow to engines, resulting in an improper ratio of air to fuel. As a result, spark plugs can be negatively affect-

ed and the engine may idle roughly or misfire. These scenarios can greatly affect fuel efficiency as well as cause engine deposits from rich fuel. To save money and trips to the fuel pump, replace filters regularly. According to GearHeads, for older cars, studies have indicated that by replacing a dirty air filter, one can improve gas mileage by as much as 14 percent. • REDUCE STRESS ON THE ENGINE. Because of the air-to-fuel mix in engines, even a mixture that is slightly off balance can affect what is going on under the hood. That means the engine must work harder to get enough clean air into the chamber to complete the combustion cycle, says the Automotive Training Center. • ENJOY MORE POWER. A filter that is saturated with dirt will restrict air flow. In such instances, drivers may notice a lack of power during acceleration. Replacing the filter can easily restore that pep. • REDUCE VEHICLE EMISSIONS. Environmental concerns are a priority for many people. By keeping the engine working properly, with the advantage of clean, unobstructed air entering the chamber, a vehicle may produce lower emissions. Replacing air filters is an easy fix that many drivers can do themselves, or ask their mechanics to do during oil changes or other repair shop visits.

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