

## Twelve Tips for Avoiding Auto Repair Scams & Finding a Reliable Automotive Mechanic

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You can avoid being the victim of an auto repair scam by first finding an honest and reliable mechanic. Whether it is for an oil change or a major repair, everyone who owns a car will need a mechanic at some point in time. But, when that time comes, how do you know that you are not going to be taken advantage of or overcharged?

One sure-fire way to avoid an auto repair scam is to use one of our highly rated RepairPal certified preferred partners. [Check for a shop in your area.](#)

Another way to avoid an auto repair scam is to protect yourself with a Vehicle Protection Plan from your local credit union or a trusted provider like [autopom!](#) autopom! is accredited and [rated A+ by the BBB](#). In addition, autopom! is rated 4.8 Stars by Trustpilot, 4.9 Stars by CarTalk.com, and 4.6 Stars by Google Reviews.

You don't want to wait until a major breakdown happens to start looking for a good mechanic. By doing a little research and following a few tips, you can find a reputable repair shop with employees you can trust.

1. **Find a shop that services your make of car.** Some mechanics are specialized for a particular manufacturer. Although they may agree to work on your car, they may not be as familiar with the specific make or may charge more for parts. Also, some general repair shops will not service higher end cars such as Mercedes or [BMW](#).
2. **Check RepairPal.com.** RepairPal shops are certified and highly rated. You can use their website to find shops that service your brand of vehicle and get self-service repair estimates. Check for one in your area using <https://www.repairpal.com/autopom>. If one of our preferred partners from RepairPal.com is not available in your area, Yelp.com is a handy resource. Look for local shops that have four stars or better. Also look for shops that have multiple reviews (dozens are preferable). In my area, it's not difficult to find shops with five stars based on 40 reviews. Read the reviews and read between the lines. It has been my experience that the Yelp review site is a pretty reliable indicator of service provider quality.
3. **Check certification and licenses.** Look for garages that have been approved by the American Automobile Association (AAA) and/or the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE). Also, make sure that the shop meets all the state licensing requirements. You may also want to check with the local [Better Business Bureau](#) to see if any complaints have been filed about repair scams. If the shop has certification from RepairPal.com you need not look further.
4. **Keep good records.** Keeping an accurate maintenance log and copies of all invoices and receipts is a good way to prevent auto repair scams. If a mechanic recommends something that has just been completed, you can be fairly sure that they didn't actually inspect your car. If you know that you just changed your air filter last month, and you have the paperwork to prove it, the mechanic will learn very quickly that you cannot be fooled. It is also a good idea to check your vehicle fluids before taking

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your car into a garage. This way, you will know if the fluid is low or dirty, in case you are charged for top-up or shown an "inaccurate" sample.

5. **Look for a shop that offers guarantees.** You do not want to pay for sloppy work that needs to be repaired again in a few weeks. Protect yourself by making sure that the garage guarantees its service. Also, make sure that you know what is covered (parts, labor, or both) and for how many months/miles this warranty is valid.
6. **Get a written estimate.** A reputable shop will provide an itemized estimate listing the cost of all parts, labor, taxes, and fees. Make sure that the mechanic is willing to sign and honor this estimate, and ask about their policy if additional work is needed. Your approval should be required before the completion of any repairs not listed on the estimate. If you're using a RepairPal shop, use their Fair Price Estimator to get an estimate for the repair work. RepairPal shops have agreed to guarantee that the price will be within the estimated range (not including diagnostics, sales tax, shop fees, or add-on sales).
7. **Ask questions.** You should be able to ask the mechanic why a particular repair needs to be done and get a respectful and straight answer. They should take the time to explain to you what is wrong with your vehicle and how it can be repaired. If you feel like the mechanic is "talking in circles" or "talking down" to you, then you may question his integrity.
8. **Look for a repair shop that is busy.** If a garage is reliable and trustworthy, it will have a large customer base. Of course, you may have to wait a little longer to get your car in for repairs, but that is better than using a mechanic who does sloppy work or lacks the proper certification. If you are waiting while your vehicle is being serviced, ask other customers about the reputation and quality of the garage.
9. **"Test" a mechanic with a simple service or small repair.** Don't wait for a major mechanical failure to begin looking for a reliable mechanic. If you are considering a particular shop, take your car in for an oil change or minor repair to see how confident you feel about their service. How did they treat you? Do they have a polite, customer friendly staff? Did they pressure you to authorize work that isn't needed? Did they provide an estimate and then stick to it? Did they give you an itemized bill and review the invoice details? If you trust them with the small repairs, it's a good bet that you will be able to count on them when something more serious happens.
10. **Have some basic knowledge about your car.** You don't have to be a mechanic, but being familiar with the possible causes of specific signs and symptoms will lower the chances of you being taken advantage of and falling victim to auto repair scams. A mechanic will be less likely to try to "pull the wool over your eyes" if you know or understand basic terminology. RepairPal.com has a great [Troubleshooting Guide](#) that you can use to better understand your particular issue.
11. **The customer has control.** When it comes to taking their car to a mechanic, many people are nervous or intimidated. Relax and remember that you are the one calling the shots. It's your money, so you are in charge of the situation. If you don't feel comfortable going alone then take someone with you. And, don't be afraid to ask questions or say "no." If you aren't happy with the service or the way you are treated, then take your vehicle somewhere else.

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12. **If in doubt, get a second opinion.** If you are not convinced that a mechanic is being completely honest and upfront with you, take your vehicle to another garage for a second opinion. This is a good way to put your mind at ease and find out who you can trust.

A reliable and reputable mechanic will run a professional and organized business, have customer friendly staff, provide a detailed estimate and invoice, and stand behind his work. Research the reputation of a shop (remember RepairPal.com and yelp.com) and then try it out with a small job, so when a major breakdown occurs, you will not be the victim of an auto repair scam.

Remember, Two sure-fire ways to avoid auto repair scams:

- Protect your car or truck with a Vehicle Protection Plan from [autopom!](#) Another reliable source is your local credit union.
- Locate and use a trusted and highly rated repair facility that is certified by [RepairPal.com](#).