

No matter what you drive – sports car, family sedan, SUV, pickup, or minivan, when you go in for repairs or service, you want the job done right. The following advice should take much of the guesswork out of finding a good repair establishment.

### Preliminaries

*Don't just drop your vehicle off at the nearest establishment and hope for the best. That's not choosing a shop, that's merely gambling.*

- ❑ Read your owners' manual to become familiar with your vehicle and follow the manufacturer's suggested service schedule.
- ❑ Start shopping for a repair facility *before* you need one; you can make better decisions when you are not rushed or in a panic.
- ❑ Ask friends and associates for their recommendations. Even in this high-tech era, old-fashioned word-of-mouth reputation is still valuable.
- ❑ Check with your local consumer protection agency and online reviews regarding the reputation of the shop in question.
- ❑ If possible, arrange for alternate transportation in advance so you will not feel forced to choose a

facility solely on the basis of location.

*Once you choose a repair shop, start off with a minor job; if you are pleased, trust them with more complicated repairs later.*

### At the Shop

- ❑ Look for a neat, well-organized facility, with vehicles in the parking lot equal in value to your own and modern equipment in the service bays.
- ❑ Professionally run establishments will have a courteous, helpful staff. The service writer should be willing to answer *all* of your questions.
- ❑ Feel free to ask for the names of a few customers. Call them. Also, speak with other people in the waiting area to see if they've been there before and are satisfied with the service.
- ❑ All policies including labor rates, guarantees, methods of payment, etc. should be posted and/or explained to your satisfaction.
- ❑ Ask if the shop customarily handles your vehicle make and model. Some facilities do specialize in certain vehicle makes.

- ❑ Ask if the shop usually does your type of repair, especially if you need major work.
- ❑ Look for signs of professionalism in the customer service area, civic and community service awards, membership in the Better Business Bureau, AAA-Approved Auto Repair status, and customer service awards.

*The backbone of any shop is the competence of the technicians.*

- ❑ Look for evidence of qualified technicians, such as trade school diplomas, certificates of advanced course work, and ASE certification, which is a national standard of technician competence.

### Follow-up

- ❑ Keep all paperwork!
- ❑ Reward good service with repeat business. It is mutually beneficial to you and the shop owner to establish a relationship.
- ❑ If the service was not all you expected, don't rush to another shop. Discuss the problem with the service manager or the owner. Give the business a chance to resolve the problem. Reputable shops value customer feedback and will make a sincere effort to keep your business.

## *Pennsylvania Auto Regulations*

Pennsylvanians are protected by the Automotive Industry Trade Practices regulations, which detail consumers' rights when having a car repaired. The regulations provide that a repair shop must:

- ❑ Obtain the consumer's written or verbal authorization *before* charging for repairs.
- ❑ Obtain additional authorization from the consumer before performing repairs that exceed the dollar limit set by the customer.
- ❑ Inform the consumer whether parts put on the vehicle are new, used, or reconditioned.
- ❑ Disclose, in advance, any charges for estimates or storage.
- ❑ Complete repairs within the time specified (or within 24 hours of delivery if no time is mentioned).
- ❑ Advise customers of their right to have replaced parts returned to them.
- ❑ Provide a detailed bill itemizing charges for parts and labor.

## *About ASE*

Perhaps years ago, a shade-tree mechanic whose only credentials were a tool box and busted knuckles was enough. But today's high-tech vehicles *need* more... and today's conscientious consumers *demand* more.

The independent, non-profit National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) conducts the only industry-wide, national certification program for automotive technicians.

Consumers benefit from ASE's certification program since it takes much of the guesswork out of finding a competent technician.

ASE certifies the competency of individual technicians through a series of standardized specialty exams (brakes, transmissions, engine repairs, etc.)

Certified technicians are issued pocket credentials listing their area(s) of expertise and usually wear blue and white ASE shoulder insignia, while employers often post the ASE sign on the premises. There are almost a half-million ASE technicians at work in every type of repair facility.

**The material in this brochure is for informational purposes only.  
It is meant to give you general information and not specific legal advice.**

*Provided as a public service by  
The Bucks County Commissioners*

# **Choosing a Reliable Repair Shop**



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