

13 Things Your Car Mechanic Won't Tell You

1. "Watch out for scare tactics. Admonitions like 'I wouldn't drive this another mile' should be viewed with suspicion."
2. "Check for ASE [National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence] or AAA [American Automobile Association] certification, as well as a state license. Reputable shops are proud to display them."
3. "Ask, ask, ask. For recommendations, years in business, warranties offered, licenses, and the type of equipment used. Look for a clean garage. A floor cluttered with empty oil cans, worn tires, and dirty rags is a red flag."
4. "Never sign a blank authorization form. Always get a signed work order with a specific estimate for each job and warranties that apply."
5. "It's nuts to take a car with engine problems to a shop without a good engine analyzer and scan tool. Any mechanic who says 'I don't need fancy equipment' should be avoided."
6. "Synthetic motor oils may cost more, but you'll get a lot more miles between changes."
7. "When you go for a second opinion, don't tell the mechanic what the first diagnosis and price were."
8. "Coolant flushes and power steering flushes are very common gimmicks at quick lubes. Check your owner's manual; many cars have fluid that is designed to go 100,000 miles. And cleaning fuel injectors is a waste of time and money. There are additives on the market that do a great job."
9. "Always ask for OE [original equipment] brake pads or at least equivalent material. A \$49.95 brake job will usually get you the worst friction material you can buy-it's the difference between stopping short and causing a pileup on the way to work."
10. "Ask about your new tire's 'build date.' If you're getting an unusually good deal, you might be receiving three-year-old treads, especially risky for snow tires."

11. "Lifetime mufflers? What would ever make you think a muffler will last a lifetime? Yes, they'll give you free replacements, but they'll hit you over the head for expensive pipe repairs."
12. "Consult your dealer before you have work done on a catalytic converter or emissions parts. Some of these items carry a very long warranty, and free replacement is often required by law."
13. "It's not okay for your 'check engine' light to stay on all the time. It's probably not 'a loose gas cap.'"

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