

Look around to discover qualified mechanic for car

Getting an automobile repaired properly is one of the nation's top consumer frustrations. In fact, many car owners believe that ace mechanics no longer exist.

"Not true," says Gary Cassidy, technical service representative for Fram Corp., an automotive products manufacturer. "Reliable mechanics do exist. Motorists simply must learn how to look for a good repair shop and communicate with the mechanic there."

The first step, he suggests, is to ask friends where their cars are repaired and whether the service is reliable.

Next, visit recommended shops.

"Look around the test equipment, tools and repaired cars. If these are filthy or littered, take it as a trouble sign. How a mechanic takes care of his and others' property may indicate how he will care for your car," Cassidy explains.

Then ask about certified mechanics.

The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (NIASE) is the only nationally recognized mechanic certification group. The organization gives competency tests in eight categories of automotive technology.

"Good mechanics voluntarily take these tests and those who pass usually display their certificates in the shop," he adds.

When you have found a prospective shop, observe how the mechanic diagnoses your car trouble.

"Do not accept curbstone diagnoses," says Cassidy. "There could be many causes for a specific problem and good mechanics will make a thorough and accurate check first."



This man's patch assures you a competent mechanic is working on your car.

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He also recommends asking for an estimate before work is done. Although setting an exact price may be difficult, the mechanic should give you a price range.

"Mechanics who refuse to give estimates or call when an estimate changes should be avoided," says Cassidy. He adds that good mechanics will be undaunted by your request for a second opinion.

How you talk to your mechanic is just as important in avoiding unnecessary or incorrect repairs. For instance, which phrase would

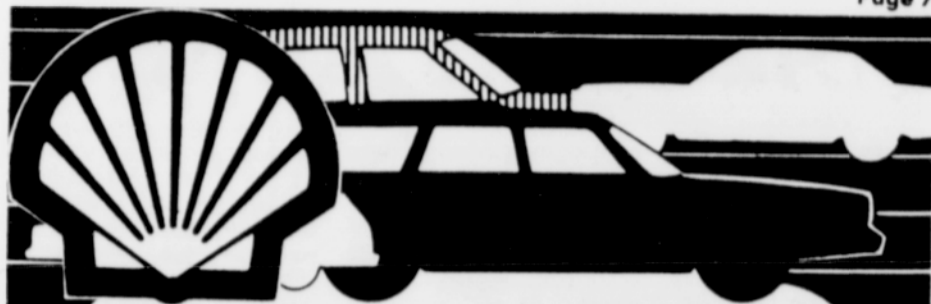
you use when bringing your car in for repairs?

a. "I'm not sure what's wrong. Please check it out and tell me what's needed to repair it."

b. "I'm not sure what's wrong. Take a look at it and do whatever is necessary to make it right."

The first phrase (a) is more effective in preventing unnecessary repairs because it urges the mechanic to first see if repairs are needed, then consult the owner before actual work begins.

The second phrase gives the mechanic a freer hand. It is a direct request to make repairs, whether necessary or not.



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