

Summer Car Care

Keep your car on the road this summer



COURTESY PHOTOS

Topics to discuss before hiring your next mechanic

Few decisions weigh as heavily on automobile owners as their choice of mechanic. A good mechanic goes a long way toward ensuring drivers and their passengers stay safe on the road and that those drivers' vehicles perform at their peak for years to come. That's an important role to play, and it's why choosing a mechanic is a decision that should not be taken lightly.

You don't need to be a car guy or gal to find a trustworthy and talented mechanic. You might just need to open a dialogue, discussing a handful of topics that can help you feel more comfortable and know you have made the right choice in automotive service provider once a final decision has been made.

Certification can go a long way toward helping drivers find mechanics they can trust. A certified technician should have his or her credentials readily available to prospective customers, and these credentials should list

each professional's area of certification.

When shopping for a new mechanic, make sure that he or she is certified. In addition, discuss with the mechanic his or her work history, including any additional areas of expertise.

Many mechanics offer free estimates, but that should not be taken for granted. When bringing a car in for an estimate, drivers should confirm with the mechanic who will conduct the examination if the estimate is free or if they will be charged an inspection fee.

In addition to any fees regarding estimates, drivers should also inquire about labor costs and the payment policies at the facility. Labor can be quite expensive, so



it's best that you know these rates in advance of any repairs being conducted on your vehicle. It's also important to get a run-down of the company payment policies, especially if your vehicle is in need of potentially costly repairs. You

don't want the bill to shock you once the work has been completed, so don't hesitate to be inquisitive before leaving a car at the garage.

Replacing parts on a vehicle is a cause for concern for many drivers, and rightfully so. Consumer advocacy groups have exposed many mechanics who pass off used auto parts as new parts, charging their customers new part prices along the way.

Drivers can inquire about company policies regarding vehicle parts. Does the garage even install used parts? If so, do they let drivers choose either new or used parts before any work is done? If the garage only uses new parts, ask for parts with solid warranties.

The preowned vehicle market is thriving, and drivers who take care of their vehicles have earned the right to reap their rewards for being good owners when it comes time to sell the car.

When interviewing prospective mechanics, ask if they are willing to provide detailed documentation of any work they do on your vehicle. Such documentation can then be shared with prospective buyers when you want to sell the car, and it also serves as a way to keep the garage accountable for all the work they have done on the car throughout your relationship.

— Metro

Apps make driving, trip planning 'smarter'

Smartphones are a convenient tool that few people can now imagine living without. Smartphone-toting moms and dads know they always have a camera on hand to take quick snaps of their youngsters, while foodies rely on their smartphones to find nearby restaurants or read reviews of eateries while out on the town. But drivers also can benefit from smartphones thanks to the following apps.

- **Waze:** Commuters who download Waze to their smartphones may wonder how they ever navigated their daily treks to the office without this useful app, which allows drivers to share real-time traffic and road information with their fellow motorists. Drivers can use Waze to save time and gas money and make their commutes less stressful. Drivers who use Waze can actively report accidents and find the least expensive gas prices posted by fellow drivers in their community.

- **GasBuddy:** Drivers are conditioned to find the most affordable gas prices around. The GasBuddy app makes it easy to do just that, as users can share gas prices in their community, which fellow drivers can then peruse to find the most affordable filling stations along their driving routes. Drivers can enter a city, ZIP code or postal code to find the cheapest gas in their vicinity.

- **AAA Mobile:** AAA members can use the AAA Mobile app to access AAA services

on their smartphones. Such services include trip planning, member discounts and roadside assistance. The app also includes a mobile version of the motor club's popular TripTik Travel Planner, which makes it easy for smartphone users to find club-approved hotels, restaurants and attractions. Drivers can even create and share trip itineraries between their desktop and mobile devices.

- **Insurance:** Nearly every auto insurance provider now offers its own mobile app to policy holders. Such apps may allow drivers to pay their bills, view their insurance identification cards, peruse their policies, arrange for roadside assistance and report claims among other things. These apps put your auto insurance provider at your fingertips and can make it much easier to manage your policy.

- **TripCheck:** Locally, drivers are encouraged to check Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) www.TripCheck.com for current conditions before heading out the door.

In addition, drivers can take extra precautions by packing a roadside emergency kit, including: roadside flares, first-aid kit, jumper cables, warm blankets, flashlight, basic tool kit, tire-pressure gauge, spare tire and jack, snacks and water, extra car fluids, cell phone charger and important phone numbers. — Metro

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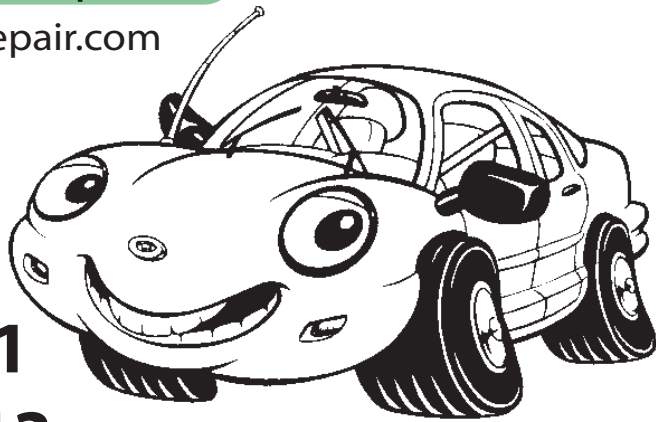
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