



Car care is definitely a win-win situation. Besides helping the environment, a properly maintained and operated vehicle will run more efficiently, will be safer, and will last longer-up to 50% longer, according to a survey of ASE-certified Master Auto Technicians. The following tips should put you on the road to environmentally conscious car care.

- 
- Glove Box Guide for Consumers**
- ASE**
- ASE is the national leader in automotive education and certification.

© 2011 National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE). All rights reserved.

[Home](#) > [News & Events](#) > [Publications](#) > [Glove Box Tips](#) > [How to Communicate for Better Automotive Service](#)

## How to Communicate for Better Automotive Service

Today's cars, light trucks, and sport-utility vehicles are high-tech marvels with digital dashboards, oxygen sensors, electronic computers, unibody construction, and more. They run better, longer, and more efficiently than models of years past.

But when it comes to repairs, some things stay the same. Whatever type of repair facility you patronize--dealership, service station, independent garage, specialty shop, or a national franchise--good communication between the customer and the shop is vital.

The following tips should help you along the way:

### Do your homework before taking your vehicle in for repairs or service.

- Read the owner's manual to learn about the vehicle's systems and components.
- Follow the recommended service schedules.
- Keep a log of all repairs and service.



**When you think about it, you know your car better than anyone else. You drive it every day and know how it feels and sounds when everything is right. So don't ignore its warning signals.**

Use all of your senses to inspect your car frequently. Check for:

- Unusual sounds, odors, drips, leaks, smoke, warning lights, gauge readings.
- Changes in acceleration, engine performance, gas mileage, fluid levels.
- Worn tires, belts, hoses.
- Problems in handling, braking, steering, vibrations.
- Note when the problem occurs.
- Is it constant or periodic?
- When the vehicle is cold or after the engine has warmed up?
- At all speeds? Only under acceleration? During braking? When shifting?
- When did the problem first start?

**Professionally run repair establishments have always recognized the importance of communications in automotive repairs.**

### Once you are at the repair establishment, communicate your findings.

- Be prepared to describe the symptoms. (In larger shops you'll probably speak with a service writer/service manager rather than with the technician directly.)
- Carry a written list of the symptoms that you can give to the technician or service manager.
- Resist the temptation to suggest a specific course of repair. Just as you would with your physician, tell where it hurts and how long it's been that way, but let the technician diagnose and recommend a remedy.

### Stay involved...Ask questions.

- Ask as many questions as you need. Do not be embarrassed to request lay definitions.
- Don't rush the service writer or technician to make an on-the-spot diagnosis. Ask to be called and apprised of the problem, course of action, and costs before work begins.

[Home](#) > [News & Events](#) > [Publications](#) > [Glove Box Tips](#) > [Getting Your Vehicle Ready For Summer](#)

## Getting Your Vehicle Ready For Summer

Summer's heat, dust, and stop-and-go traffic, will take their toll on your vehicle. Add the effects of last winter, and you could be poised for a breakdown. You can lessen the odds of mechanical failure through periodic maintenance...Your vehicle should last longer and command a higher resale price, too!

Some of the following tips are easy to do; others require a skilled auto technician.

- **Air Conditioning**

A marginally operating system will fail in hot weather. Have the system examined by a qualified technician. Newer models have cabin air filters that clean the air entering the heating and air conditioning system. Check your owner's manual for location and replacement interval

- **Cooling System**

The greatest cause of summer breakdowns is overheating. The cooling system should be completely flushed and refilled about every 24 months. The level, condition, and concentration of the coolant should be checked periodically. (A 50/50 mix of antifreeze and water is usually recommended.) DIYers, never remove the radiator cap until the engine has thoroughly cooled! The tightness and condition of drive belts, clamps, and hoses should be checked by a pro.

- **Oil**

Change your oil and oil filter as specified in your manual more often (every 3,000 miles) if you make frequent short jaunts, extended trips with lots of luggage, or tow a trailer.

- **Engine Performance**

Replace other filters (air, fuel, PCV, etc.) as recommended more often in dusty conditions. Get engine drive-ability problems (hard starts, rough idling, stalling, diminished power, etc.) corrected at a good shop.

- **Windshield Wipers**

A dirty windshield causes eye fatigue and can pose a safety hazard. Replace worn blades and get plenty of windshield washer solvent.

- **Lights**

Inspect all lights and bulbs; replace burned out bulbs; periodically clean dirt and insects from all lenses. To prevent scratching, never use a dry rag.

- **Tires**

Have your tires rotated about every 5,000 miles. Check tire pressures once a month; check them while they're cold before driving for any distance. Don't forget to check your spare as well and be sure the jack is in good condition. Examine tires for tread life, uneven wearing, and cupping; check the sidewalls for cuts and nicks. An alignment is warranted if there's uneven tread wear or if your vehicle pulls to one side.

- **Brakes**

Brakes should be inspected as recommended in your manual, or sooner if you notice



pulsations, grabbing, noises, or longer stopping distance. Minor brake problems should be corrected promptly.

- **Battery**

Batteries can fail any time of year. The only accurate way to detect a weak battery is with professional equipment. Routine care: Scrape away corrosion from posts and cable connections; clean all surfaces; re-tighten all connections. If battery caps are removable, check the fluid level monthly. Avoid contact with corrosive deposits and battery acid. Wear eye protection and rubber gloves.

- **Emergencies**

Carry some basic tools — ask a technician for suggestions. Also include a first aid kit, flares, and a flashlight.



[Home](#) > [News & Events](#) > [Publications](#) > [Glove Box Tips](#) > [Getting Your Vehicle Ready For Winter](#)

## Getting Your Vehicle Ready For Winter

Mechanical failure — an inconvenience anytime it occurs — can be deadly in the winter. Preventive maintenance is a must. Besides, a well-maintained vehicle is more enjoyable to drive, lasts longer, and could command a higher resale price.

Some of the following tips can be performed by any do-it-yourselfer; others require the skilled hands of a professional auto technician.



- **Engine Performance**

Get engine driveability problems (hard starts, rough idling, stalling, diminished power, etc.) corrected at a good repair shop. Cold weather makes existing problems worse. Replace dirty filters—air, fuel, etc.

- **Fuel**

Put a bottle of fuel de-icer in your tank once a month to help keep moisture from freezing in the fuel line. Note that a full gas tank helps keep moisture from forming.

- **Oil**

Change your oil and oil filter as specified in your manual — more often (every 3,000 miles) if your driving is mostly stop-and-go or consists of frequent short trips.

- **Cooling Systems**

The cooling system should be completely flushed and refilled about every 24 months. The level, condition, and concentration of the coolant should be checked periodically. (A 50/50 mix of anti-freeze and water is usually recommended.)

DIYers, never remove the radiator cap until the engine has thoroughly cooled! The tightness and condition of drive belts, clamps, and hoses should be checked by a pro.

- **Windshield Wipers**

Replace old blades. If your climate is harsh, purchase rubber-clad (winter) blades to fight ice build-up. Stock up on windshield washer solvent—you'll be surprised how much you use. Carry an ice-scraper.

- **Heater/Defroster**

The heater and defroster must be in good working condition for passenger comfort and driver visibility. Newer models have a cabin air filter that should be replaced periodically. Check your owner's manual for the location and replacement interval.

- **Battery**

The only accurate way to detect a weak battery is with professional equipment. Routine care: Scrape away corrosion from posts and cable connections; clean all surfaces; re-tighten all connections. If battery caps are removable, check fluid level monthly. Avoid contact with corrosive deposits and battery acid. Wear eye protection and rubber gloves.

- **Lights**

Inspect all lights and bulbs; replace burned out bulbs; periodically clean road grime from all lenses. To prevent scratching, never use a dry rag.

- **Exhaust System**

Your vehicle should be placed on a lift and the exhaust system examined for leaks. The trunk and floor boards should be inspected for small holes. Exhaust fumes can be deadly.

- **Tires**

Worn tires will be of little use in winter weather. Examine tires for remaining tread life, uneven wearing, and cupping; check the sidewalls for cuts and nicks. Check tire pressures once a month. Check the tires when they are cold, before driving for any distance. Rotate as recommended. Don't forget your spare, and be sure the jack is in good condition.

- **Carry Emergency Gear**

Carry gloves, boots, blankets, flares, a small shovel, sand or kitty litter, tire chains, and a flash light. Put a few "high-energy" snacks in your glove box.

## Choosing the Right Repair Shop

No matter what you drive - sports car, family sedan, pick-up, or mini-van - 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.

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.

### I. Preliminaries

- Read your owner's 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 recommendations; even in this high-tech era, old-fashioned word of mouth reputation is valuable.
- Check with your local consumer organization(s) regarding the reputation of the business. Inquire about complaints and the rate of resolution of complaints.
- If possible, arrange for alternate transportation in advance so you will not feel forced to choose a shop solely on location.



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

### II. 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.
- All policies (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 specialize.
- 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, customer service awards.
- Look for evidence of qualified technicians, such as trade school diplomas, certificates of advanced course work, and ASE certifications - a national standard of technician competence.

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

### III. Follow-Up

- Keep good records; 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 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.