

HOW TO TALK WITH AN AUTO REPAIR TECHNICIAN

Quality & Customer Satisfaction



How many times have you hesitated to bring your car into a shop because you were not sure it would be fixed the way you wanted? Maybe you were worried that the technician would be argumentative, evasive, incompetent ... or simply too busy to spend time with you.

“Many consumers are apprehensive about bringing their vehicle into a shop,” said Barry Soltz, president of the nonprofit Motorist Assurance Program. “They worry about trying to communicate clearly with technicians or other shop personnel, and they’re afraid their vehicle won’t get the attention it deserves.”

Fortunately for consumers, the automotive maintenance and repair industry is worried about all of that, too! Plus, as vehicles have become more complex, the need for clear communication has become all the more important. To help address this challenge, a growing number of auto repair companies and shops have signed on with the Motorist Assurance Program (MAP).

MAP brought industry experts, consumer advisors and others together to develop Uniform Inspection & Communication Standards covering all the major systems in a vehicle.

MAP’s Uniform Inspection & Communication Standards (UICS) help customers and technicians communicate clearly about a vehicle’s problems and the options for fixing those problems. Each set of standards outlines what’s suggested or required for any given problem. Facilities that agree in writing to follow the MAP UICSs can apply to participate in the MAP program.

“MAP’s standards facilitate communication,” Soltz said. “Consumers can follow a few other simple steps to make the most of their visit to a shop... whether it’s MAP-participating or not.”

1. Before calling or going to a shop, take five minutes to write down in your own words what your vehicle is doing (or not doing). Make a note of every detail. Is your car making a noise? Describe the noise. Where does it seem to be coming from? Is the car feeling sluggish? When, how often, under what conditions? Ask yourself a lot of detailed questions. Ideally, jot these observations down right after you notice them (but not while you’re trying to drive, of course!).
2. With your notes in hand, visit the shop of your choice. If it’s a MAP-participating shop, the technician will have a copy of MAP’s Uniform Inspection & Communication Standards handy, which will help guide the diagnosis. Either way, make sure the technician or customer service rep is giving you his or her full attention before you try to describe what’s happening with your vehicle. Shops are often busy, but that’s no excuse for poor service. Don’t leave your car in the hands of a technician until:
 - a. you’re satisfied he/she has heard you out;
 - b. you and the technician have agreed on a course of action; and
 - c. you have received a completed written inspection form and repair estimate.
3. Once you’ve done your part in describing your vehicle’s problem as clearly as possible, ask questions. No good technician will simply listen to your description of a problem and say, “Ok, I’ll fix it.” Ask the technician or customer service rep for their recommendations as to what is “required” vs. “suggested” to be repaired or replaced. The shop may charge for a diagnosis. That’s money well spent, so the technician can pinpoint the problem(s).

Ask questions like:

- What would cause such a condition?
- What industry standards guide service on that vehicle system?
- Can the problem be “repaired” or will it require “replacement” of parts?
- How is the repair performed, in general terms?
- Could the repair process itself affect other vehicle components (for example, will belts or hoses have to be disconnected or replaced as part of the repair)?
- How long will it take?

Never be afraid to ask questions. As the saying goes, the only dumb question is the one that wasn’t asked!

We Promise

TO PROVIDE written recommendations for repairs that are explained and based on system failure, improved system performance or preventive maintenance, according to accepted industry standards.

TO OFFER a written estimate, including the reason for the repair, and no work will be performed without your prior authorization.

TO EMPLOY personnel trained in accordance with MAP Standards of Service who are qualified to perform an inspection based on MAP Uniform Inspection Standards.

TO INCLUDE a written limited warranty at no extra cost.

TO ASSURE that customer disputes are addressed in a timely, professional and courteous manner.

**MAP's
Pledge to
Customers**



201 Park Washington Court • Falls Church, VA 22046
703-538-3557 phone • 202-318-0378 fax • www.motorist.org