

Q: Why is the repair taking so long and how long should a repair take?

A: Every repair is different. Different vehicles may take a different amount of time to replace the same parts (for example, front brake pads on a 00 Ford Taurus will take a different amount of time than front brake pads on a 2010 Dodge Charger). Another variable is what parts are being replaced. For example, adding the replacement of the brake rotors to that front brake job will increase the amount of time that it will take to make the repairs. Consider that you have chosen to have your rotors resurfaced instead of replaced (if possible), that means sending them out to the machine shop to have the work done before we can re-install them and that means waiting for the machine shop's schedule.

Things to consider:

Availability of replacement parts

Whether additional parts are needed to complete the job (see FAQ2 for more information on this)

Worn, rusty, frozen components (see FAQ2 for more information on this)

What type of repair (i.e. brakes, wheel bearings, radiator, battery.. all take different amounts of time)

Are you having multiple repairs made or services performed?

Schedule of the Technician making the repair or performing the maintenance service.

The best thing for you, our customers, to remember is that sometimes repairs take more time than you, or we, expect. Little things like how many times a technician has to use the phone to either call or speak to a customer, the customer who walks in with a flat tire or needing an oil change or a check engine light on and wanting to know if we can do it/take a look at it "right now" (Think about your own job and how many times a day are you interrupted?); signing for, checking in, waiting for and ordering parts.. all these things take time.

We recommend to our customers that you first, please and thank you, call for an appointment if at all possible. Second, please plan on your vehicle being here for at least the day (that means dropping it off either the night before, and using our secure lock box or as close to 8am as possible when we open, and planning on picking your vehicle up at the end of the day between 5 and 6pm.

If we are going to need your vehicle longer than one business day, we will either discuss this with you ahead of time or make every possible effort to contact you and advise you of this - AND WHY - as soon as possible.

Q: Do you accept and/or recommend a repair warranty?

A: We do accept your purchased extended warranty however, there are some things we think you should know about them and that you should be aware and advised that even "bumper to bumper" plans WILL still cost you money when you pick your car up at the shop after a "covered" repair. Here's why...

Please see this article from Repair Trust website for more information:  
[http://www.repairtrust.com/articles\\_extwarr.html](http://www.repairtrust.com/articles_extwarr.html) (reproduced below)

Does an auto extended warranty make economic sense?

Extended warranties, also called extended service contracts, extended service policies, or an extended automobile warranty.

Auto extended warranties are supposed to pay (in full or in part) for specified repairs for a specific period of time after the expiration of the factory warranty. They can be a great value. They can also be a significant waste of money. It gets quite foggy in the details. What exactly is covered? How long? How much? Are there hidden charges?

There are numerous extended warranty companies and an even wider variety of warranty packages available: silver, gold, platinum, platinum-plus, and a host of other confidence-building words. What's the best plan, and are extended service contracts worth the money?

Extended auto warranties, like life insurance policies, are a numbers game. They're a gamble. You pay \$2500-\$4500 for a 2 year, 100,000-mile protection plan and hope that you get at least that back in warranty repairs. The provider on the other hand, hopes to pay out less than it insured.

There are three major types of plan providers: The manufacturer, the dealership/third party, and third party providers. Each one has its pros and cons (discussed ahead).

What exactly is covered in an extended service plan? As mentioned above, what's covered depends on the package purchased. Some plans only cover the power train: the mechanical components of the engine, transmission, and rear-end.

Other plans cover the power train plus some electrical components. Still others cover electrical, advanced electrical, and computer components.

Some plans only cover what's listed in the contract. This is called a "Stated" or "Named" contract. This means that if it's not stated, it's not covered. Some cover bumper-to-bumper, similar to a manufacturer warranty, except trim pieces, upholstery, exterior components, cosmetic items, and a number of other exclusions.

Never before has the adage, "The devil's in the details," been so applicable.

[Click Auto Repair Costs to Learn More about car repair scams and tactics...](#)

**Manufacturer Extended Plans:** Extended service plans from the manufacturer are the best in terms of coverage, convenience, and quality. Coverage is similar to the warranty while the vehicle was under its original factory warranty—with similar exclusions stated above. The billing is direct, meaning you don't have to pay out-of-pocket, except for a deductible, if applicable. Quality is great too, as an extended warranty from the manufacturer will only use factory parts. Manufacturers also have money, so there's less risk of bankruptcy - a common event with extended warranty companies..

The down side of manufacturer extended service plans is that they are not cheap. These plans are generally the most expensive, require low mileage standards, and necessitate servicing your vehicle at a dealer for coverage.

Dealership/Third Party Plans: Extended warranties from a dealership are actually from a third party insurer. These providers are generally reputable, but not always. However, if there is an issue (such as the warranty provider filing chapter 11, which again, is quite frequent in the extended service contract business), the dealer may step in to cover any repairs that would have been covered under the defunct plan. Also, claims are easier: billing is direct because the dealership has a working relationship with the provider, and there is usually a general agreement on the price of repairs.

Some dealers set up their own “internal extended warranty,” which is honored by the selling dealer. This is rare, and should not be confused with a manufacturer warranty.

Important: extended warranties are often passed off as “manufacturer” warranties. They’re not. This is a sales trick. Also be aware that there is a significant mark up on these plans (A \$1000 is not uncommon), which, if you decide to purchase a plan, can be negotiated down to cost - or close to it.

Third Party Plans: These plans are called third party plans because they are outside the responsibility of the manufacturer and the service center performing the repairs (unless there’s a working relationship with a repair shop as stated above).

There are hundreds of extended service contract companies. Some have good reputations, some don’t. Third party plans are frequently sold by used car dealers.

Important: You may also receive an official looking notification in the mail stating that your warranty is expiring, and directing you to call an 800 number ASAP. This is a marketing tactic by an independent warranty provider. Despite the “official” appearance of the postcard or envelope, it’s not from the manufacturer. Manufacturers do not send out reminders about warranty expiration.

Given the wide-variety of third party plans there are numerous red flags.

1) Claims: Extended warranty companies will be quick to tell you that filing claims is easy, and that the service center gets paid immediately via a credit card. Thus, there’s no out-of-pocket expense for you.

However, the warranty company can't dictate a service center's policies. Some service centers will only accept payment from the repair customer. Thus the burden is on the repair customer to fill out the forms, contact their warranty company, and await reimbursement via check, which can take 2-8 weeks.

It is the service center's responsibility to contact the extended warranty company to let them know what's wrong with the vehicle and to check coverage. This process can take anywhere from 20 minutes to 20 days, sometimes more, depending on the degree of repairs and especially the amount. (See \$1000 and Adjusters ahead)

Service centers and extended warranty companies frequently battle over the "fair" price of repairs. Many repair shops no longer negotiate, and just state the price, leaving the contract holder (i.e., the service customer) responsible for the difference, if any.

2) Rentals: Rental coverage is a great benefit. However, there are fixed rates and time limits. In other words, the warranty company is not going to pay to have you drive a Mercedes-Benz, even if you drive a Benz. Rental allowances range from \$25 to \$35 per day. Rental coverage is usually based on the number of hours it takes to repair the vehicle, NOT the number of days your car has been at the shop.

3) \$1000 and Adjusters: Repairs that approach \$1000, or that require a significant amount of work, will be cause for the warranty company to call in an adjuster to confirm the diagnosis. This will delay the repairs by a minimum of 24-48 hours. It may cost you additional money when an adjuster is involved. A repair center may charge you additional time (.5 to 1.0 hour) to have your vehicle pulled back into the shop for inspection, as well as for the time spent with the adjuster.

4) Tear-down Charges: In many cases, an extended warranty company will require that a particular component be taken apart for inspection to determine if the repair is indeed needed and covered. This puts the service customer in a very awkward position. The customer will have to authorize potentially hundreds of dollars of tear-down expense in the hopes that the repair is covered. If it's not, the customer is out the hundreds in tear-down PLUS the actual repair. This does happen!

Common Myths About Extended Automobile Warranty:

Extended warranties cover maintenance services and brake work.

No. Extended warranty plans do not cover maintenance or wearable items. Brake pads and rotors are wearable parts. Maintenance such as coolant, brake and transmission flushes, tune-ups, services, oil changes, bulbs, wipers, and more are not covered.

They told me it's bumper-to-bumper, so it covers everything, right?

Wrong. Not even a factory warranty covers everything. When pitching the sale for the extended warranty, one is very often lead to believe that he or she will have nothing to worry about. This is just not true on so many levels. For example, if your bumper falls off it's not covered.

I don't have to pay anything, right?

Wrong. Despite the claims of 100% coverage or bumper-to-bumper coverage, there are many factors involved. The labor rates, labor hours, diagnostic times, parts prices, and machine work are just a few items that often conflict with a service center's policies and a plan's coverage.

Some extended contracts only pay a maximum of \$55 per hour, and only allow one half hour for diagnostic time. This is generally unacceptable to any service center. Moreover, with the complexity of today's vehicles, diagnostic time cannot be set by someone on the other end of a phone line who is not in the shop with YOUR vehicle trying to diagnose your repair needs.

In the end, it is the customer that pays the difference.

If I have an expensive problem, I can just purchase an extended service contract.

It's unethical, but it's an option many attempt. However, most service contracts have a minimum time requirement before the first claim can be filed: usually three months. Also, many contracts require that your vehicle be inspected by a service center to check for pre-existing conditions—just like life insurance.

My contract lasts up to 100,000 miles.

Only if the time limit doesn't run out first. All extended warranty plans have a time limit. For example, a typical contract will state that the vehicle is covered for two years or 100,000 miles, which ever comes first. During the sales pitch, however, the emphasis will be on the 100,000 miles, not the time.

If my car breaks, it gets fixed like new.

Actually, depending on the contract, an extended warranty company can insist on installing remanufactured or even used parts.

Items commonly not covered by extended warranties:

- Any component with a pre-existing condition
- Any component related to a Technical Service Bulletin (TSB)
- Many components that has been updated by the manufacturer
- Extra components necessary “due to manufacturer updates”
- Trim, molding, cup holders, dashboard, console, body parts, glass
- Many accessories: radios, DVD players, TVs
- Expensive electronics: climate control units, navigation assemblies

Extended automobile warranty positives: Some service contracts are transferable, and may thus increase the resale value of a vehicle. Many come with trip interruption reimbursement, towing and 24-hour road side. Some plans can also be financed, or have E-Z Pay Plans. Others offer a money-back guarantee.

What should you do? You’ll get lots of advice about doing the research, comparing plans, and reading the fine print. This is all sound advice. But what about doing the math?

Let’s say a plan costs \$2500 for 2 years or 100,000 miles, whichever comes first. To break even you’ll need a minimum of \$1250 per year in covered repairs, excluding regular maintenance. Remember covered is the vital word here.

Another way to break it down is to anticipate having to pay \$104.17 per month over the next two years in “covered” repairs. Do you want to take that bet?

What could happen? You could double your money or more in repair work. You could conceivably get a new engine and transmission (or used ones anyway). You could also easily spend \$2500 for a service contract, and still have to pay another \$2500 for repairs, which for a variety of reasons, were not covered under your plan. Now you’re out \$5000.

Alternatively, you could keep the initial \$2500. All an extended warranty does is prepay for repairs. You could stick the money in the bank and collect interest. Then you could withdraw the money for repairs as needed.

Another consideration that's rarely discussed is the cause of the problems. Many car repairs problems are the result of wear and tear, neglected maintenance, physical damage, or acts of God—such as flood damage. None of this is covered. The gamble only covers failed components.

If the vehicle you're driving does cost \$2500 to \$4500 in repairs due to outright failed components, is it a vehicle you even want to consider keeping? A vehicle that needs this kind of repair work due to mechanical, electrical, or computer failures may not be worth it. The \$2500-\$4500 would be better spent on an upgrade to a quality vehicle rather than insuring a lemon.

There's no question that auto repair is expensive, and even quality cars break from time to time. But do they breakdown to the tune of \$2500-\$4500? That's a hefty bet on a "possibility."

Q: How long should my tires last?

A: The life of a tire depends on a number of different factors, some having to do with the quality of tire and some having to do with the quality of care. Typically, each manufacturer will list how long its tires last on the labels. Carefully pay attention to these labels as it may be that a few extra Dollars per tire will get you an additional 15,000 or 20,000 miles.

Typically, tires last anywhere between 25,000 and 50,000 miles. There are a number of variables that must be taken into account, however. These include road, weather, and driving conditions.

One of the easiest ways to make sure tires last as long as possible is by keeping them properly inflated. Not inflating tires properly puts stress on areas of the tire that are not meant to receive as much stress. Also, it causes the tire to become hotter than it normally would, as it has more contact with the road surface for longer periods of time. Therefore, the structural integrity of the tire is likely to break down much quicker than it would with normal inflation.

To make sure tires last longer, vehicle owners should also rotate the tires. This usually includes moving the front tires to the back and vice versa, as well as possibly switching the tires to opposite sides of the vehicle. Vehicles with front-wheel drive tend to wear the front tires down faster. The opposite is true for rear-wheel drive vehicles. This is why tire rotation is so important.

In addition to lack of maintenance issues, tires last shorter periods of time if the primary driver is aggressive in his or her driving habits. Those who accelerate fast or stop quickly are more prone to wear out tires at a much higher rate than those who drive more conservatively. Every time a tire squeals, some of the tread is left on the road's surface.

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#### Tire Care Tips:

Check pressure weekly. Use an accurate tire pressure gauge and check pressure weekly.

Check pressure when tires are cold (driven less than a mile) and adjust to the air pressure listed on the tire placard posted on doorpost, fuel filler door, or glove box.

Don't forget the spare. Over time it can lose air. Check it monthly.

Never exceed the maximum tire pressure imprinted on the tire's sidewall.

Install valve stem caps. Keep them tight. These cost only few cents each, keep dust and dirt out of the valve stem, and act as a secondary air seal.

Drive smoothly. Jackrabbit starts, hard stops, and fast cornering shorten tread life.

Avoid road hazards. Drive around tire-puncturing debris such as glass, metal, wood and avoid potholes that can bruise tires.

Q: How can I get the best gas mileage?

A: Dirty air filters -- An air filter that is clogged with dirt, dust and bugs chokes off the air and creates a "rich" mixture -- too much gas being burned for the amount of air, which wastes gas and causes the engine to lose power. Replacing a clogged air filter can improve gas mileage by as much as 10

percent, saving about 20 cents a gallon. Vehicle gas caps -- About 17 percent of the vehicles on the roads have gas caps that are either damaged, loose or are missing altogether, causing 147 million gallons of gas to vaporize every year.

Under inflated tires -- When tires aren't inflated properly it's like driving with the parking brake on and can cost a mile or two per gallon.

Worn spark plugs -- A vehicle can have either four, six, or eight spark plugs, which fire as many as 3 million times every 1,000 miles, resulting in a lot of heat and electrical and chemical erosion. A dirty spark plug causes misfiring, which wastes fuel. Spark plugs need to be replaced as recommended by the manufacturer. See our FAQ "What is a Tune Up?" for more information on this subject.

Fuel-saving driving tips include:

Don't be an aggressive driver -- Aggressive driving can lower gas mileage by as much as 33 percent on the highway and 5 percent on city streets, which results in 10 to 66 cents per gallon.