

12 Questions to Ask a Transmission Shop Before Handing Them Your Keys

CHECKLIST ✓

Your vehicle has one or more of [these common symptoms of a problem](#) and you're pretty sure it's the transmission.

If this sounds like your situation, here are 12 questions you should ask as you're explaining the situation to a mechanic over the phone or in-person after you've brought your vehicle to their shop.

Asking a few of these questions will help you avoid getting scammed or ripped off by unauthorized/unnecessary repairs, poor quality work or misunderstandings.

Question

1

My car is doing [x], what's wrong with it?

Obviously, it takes a fair amount of skill to be able to repair a transmission properly. You want to be sure that the transmission shop possesses these skills, so don't lead them in a particular direction when you're describing the problem.

For example, your car keeps stalling when you come to a stop, and it sometimes hesitates to shift gears. Your brother-in-law is certain that your torque converter has gone bad, and based on your internet research, that does fit the symptoms. But you don't want to tell the mechanic/service writer that you suspect the torque converter. Let them find the problem on their own. Because if they can't, you probably don't want to use that shop.

Question

2

Do you charge an inspection fee?

Although most inspections should be free, many shops will actually charge you to determine... *how much they're going to charge you.*

In fairness, it does take time to diagnose a transmission problem, so in that sense, a nominal fee could be considered fair.

Regardless, you need to know how much getting that diagnosis is going to cost you. And you also want to make it plain that you want an estimate *before* they start the repairs.

Question 5

Do you offer a warranty or guarantee?

Every transmission shop is different, but most will offer some sort of warranty or guarantee on major repairs. They might even try to “upsell” you on an extra-cost extended warranty/vehicle service contract. And depending on the underwriter (usually an insurance company), it can offer an extra measure of protection later down the road. But you’ve got to read the fine print and investigate the warranty company (Google them on your smartphone while you wait for the estimate).

Question 6

Can I specify new/used/re-manufactured parts?

Unless you ask this important question, you may never know what is being used to repair your car. There is a big difference between these different types of parts, and you need to be able to make the best decision for your car and budget.

New transmission parts are going to be the most expensive, but they will last the longest. Used transmission parts are obviously going to be the cheapest. However, since they’ve been used before, you have no way of knowing how long the part will last.

Re-manufactured parts on the other hand, are rebuilt versions of used transmission parts. They are usually priced in the middle of the pricing spectrum, and some re-manufactured transmission parts even come with a short warranty.

If you’re unsure of which part type to use, ask the transmission repair person for their recommendation.

Question 7

Is your shop ASE/ASA Certified?

In order for a transmission repair shop to display the blue ASE Certified seal, three things must happen:

1.) 75% of the shop’s staff must have and maintain current ASE Certification in their respective fields.

This is essentially like ongoing education to keep technicians up-to-date with the latest procedures, practices and automotive / automotive repair technology.

2.) Each type of service offered by the shop must be covered by at least 1 ASE Certified technician.

3.) The shop must submit to a yearly review by the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence, and all ASE Certified staff must receive the necessary training to maintain current certification.

Automotive Service Association (ASA) members must adhere to the highest industry standards. Having one, or both of these approval seals means that the transmission shop is likely to provide excellent service.

Question **8**

Is your shop a member of ATRA or ATSG?



The Automatic Transmission Rebuilders Association (ATRA) Specialist and Masters courses assess technicians on an individual basis. Certification demonstrates technical competency and professionalism.

Automatic Transmission Service Group (ATSG) is a technical service advisory and membership organization.

The fees a shop has to pay to be a member member of these organizations can indicate that the shop is willing to invest in their shop and technicians in order to provide their customers with the best service possible.

Question **9**

How long do you think the repairs will take?



Even though the repair estimate calls for 6-hours of labor, you need to know how that fits into the shop's schedule. If the transmission shop has a good reputation, then they'll likely be busy, and it may take some time to get to your repair. Asking this obvious question can save you time, and help you plan for being without your car.

Question **10**

Can I get/inspect the old parts?



If you have doubts about the problem or the repair, then you can ask to have the old parts returned to you. However in some cases, the transmission shop may have to exchange the old / broken part, in order to avoid paying what's known as a 'core charge'. If that's the case, then you can still ask to inspect the old part before they turn it in.

Question **11**

Will you call me before doing extra repairs?



When you're working on a car, it's not uncommon to find other problems hiding in the background. But you need to make sure to ask the transmission shop to call you before making any repairs that aren't listed on the estimate. Otherwise, you could be in for a much bigger bill.



When the transmission shop mechanic starts to explain your options, it might seem a bit overwhelming.

So if you really don't know which option is right for you, ask the mechanic what they'd do if it was their car. This might give both of you a different perspective on the repair, and help you to determine the

When in Doubt, Get a Second Opinion

If something seems off or the repair estimate seems too high, get a second opinion. There's nothing wrong with shopping around, especially if you're spending a lot of money on a repair.

To have your questions answered by Mark, our experienced automotive professional, please [join our forum](#) and then [post a topic](#). Problems can be quite difficult to diagnose, so please provide as much detail as you can.



HERE'S WHAT TO DO NEXT

1

Send me a message to my personal email address alex@transmissionrepaircostguide.com to let me know what you think of this guide.

**2**

Pat yourself on the back. You just read a 5-page checklist ;)

