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Car Repair Prices: Why Your Oil Change Is Never "Just An Oil Change"

By Theodore Olson

For a repair shop, there is little profit in the \$29.95 oil change. By the time a shop pays its technician, pays for the oil, the filter, and the hazardous waste disposal fees, there's no money left.

This low profit margin is worsened by the extremely competitive "Quick Lube" business, which forces local repair shops to refrain from raising prices, despite rising costs.

This all begs the question: If oil change specials, which range from \$15.95 to \$29.95, clearly produce very low profits, then why do so many service facilities advertise oil change specials?

The answer is actually very simple: It gets you in the door. Service centers know that once they have your vehicle, they can sell you additional work.

Suggesting additional work is called upselling, and it's a primary profit tactic of every service facility.

Here's a typical example. You drop your vehicle off for "just an oil change." Upon completion your service representative smiles and proudly states, "We noticed that your air filter was dirty; so we popped in a new one." You may think "Great; what wonderful service!"

What really occurred is that you were casually upsold an air filter. It probably wasn't needed; it certainly wasn't replaced according to any factory recommendation, and you were definitely overcharged for what was most likely a poorly-fitting, aftermarket, inferior air filter.

Here's a real-life example that occurred recently. This particular vehicle had 54,000 miles on it, and was dropped off at a local shop for "just an oil change." Upon paying the bill, the customer was handed an estimate for \$199 to replace his air filter and top radiator hose.

Shocked at the price, he called me.

After review, I found that the air filter suggestion was premature. It didn't need replacement until the manufacturer's recommended 60,000-mile service interval. The top hose was also premature. In fact, it

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did not need replacement at all, despite a very minor problem easily addressed during the factory maintenance schedule—at no extra cost.

Check out the aftermarket part prices quoted below (including the unnecessary radiator hose). Compare these to the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) for the factory OEM parts (Original Equipment Manufacturer).

Local Shop Aftermarket Air Filter: \$32 Manufacturer OEM Filter, MSRP: \$17

Local Shop Aftermarket Top Hose: \$36 Manufacturer OEM Top Hose, MSRP: \$19

Notice that this local shop was doubling the price of the OEM parts with its inferior aftermarket parts.

Now, let's look at the labor time quoted.

Local Shop Labor Time: 2.0 @ \$60 per hour = \$120 Manufacturer Labor Time: 0.9 @ \$60 per hour = \$81

Notice that the shop labor time estimate for the repairs was 2 hours. This is more than "twice" the manufacturer's recommendations (even after calculating manufacturer times against the industry standard multiplier).

Had the local shop abided by the vehicle's particular maintenance intervals instead of trying to make a quick buck, it should have recommended a 60,000-mile service at the next visit. This would have better served the client, saved him \$199, and maintained the vehicle properly.

Instead, the service center lost a customer, forever!

What needs to be made crystal clear is that this type of price-gouging occurs every day in every type of service facility in one form or another across the automotive service industry.

This type of price-gouging is considered normal!

Theodore P. Olson (Ted)

<http://www.repairtrust.com/>

Solutions Ted holds extensive certifications from

Mercedes-Benz, Toyota, GM, and ASE. He is the author of eight books and numerous articles on the automotive service industry.

Little-Known Way To Save Money On Your Car Oil!

Car Repair Prices: Why Your Oil Change Is Never “Just An Oil Change”

By "Dr. Drew Henry"

Imagine if you could save anywhere from \$10 to \$20 dollars on your usually very expensive oil change doing something very simple. Interested?

Here's how: Every 3000 miles completely drain out and replace the oil in your vehicle... by yourself! Just by doing this, you can save anywhere from \$10–\$20 dollars on your oil change. Below are the steps you can take to drain your car oil:

Note that when changing the oil on your car you need to prepare with some supplies. You will need the following: Jack, the correct size wrench or ratchet, oil filter, oil, short bucket, rag, funnel, and a big piece of cardboard.

Start by warming up your vehicle. Drive around the block once or twice, which will heat up your engine a little bit. A vital part to changing oil. The oil must first be warmed up otherwise you will have trouble getting it out. Then, jack up your vehicle, being sure to follow all safety precautions. Make sure to find a strong point on the bottom of your vehicle before jacking it up. An axle is the best place. After making sure everything is secure you are ready to get down and start the dirty work.

The first thing to do is to drain out all the old oil. Look under your vehicle and locate the oil drain, which is usually one of the only 'plugs' in view. Generally this plug will be located right around the middle of the engine.

Then, place your big piece of card board under the vehicle, which will keep you off the ground and also serve to catch any oil that drips. Grab your short bucket or container and place it under the vehicle, just below the oil plug. Once the bucket is in place take your wrench or ratchet and unscrew the oil plug slowly, letting the oil drain.

Give the oil time to drain into the bucket, waiting till it comes out in slow drops. Then, carefully unscrew the oil filter. As you remove the filter, a short stream of oil may come out. Be sure to catch this in the bucket while not burning yourself. After you have drained all the oil out of your engine you will need to replace the plug and add the new oil filter. Once you've finished that, be sure to clean up any messes that were made with your cleaning rag.

When you're done cleaning up, you can start putting in new oil! Find out how many liters of oil your vehicle takes and pour it in with the funnel through the spout labeled for oil on top of your engine, beneath the hood of your vehicle. Use the dipstick to check and make sure the oil level is high enough. Once the tank is full put all caps back on and close the hood.

Be sure to properly dispose of all the old oil and the oil filter. And guess what? You've just saved \$10–\$20 by changing your car oil yourself... and it doesn't seem too hard, right?

Dr. Drew Henry owns a network of auto-related sites, including

<http://www.eu-cars.org>

Car Repair Prices: Why Your Oil Change Is Never “Just An Oil Change”

,
<http://www.schelcher-auto.com>

and

<http://www.blairsautosales.com>

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