

AJSS AUTO CONSULTING LLC



Car Repair Estimate Review Guide

Stop overpaying for repairs. Learn how to read any estimate, spot upsells, compare prices, and negotiate with confidence — even if you know nothing about cars.

[Decode Any Estimate](#)

[Red Flags to Watch](#)

[Negotiation Scripts](#)

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CHAPTER 1

How Repair Estimates Are Built (and Where the Profit Hides)

Every auto repair estimate has three components. Understanding each one is where you find the money — and where shops make theirs.



Parts

Shops typically mark up parts 25–100% over their cost. Ask for OEM vs. aftermarket vs. remanufactured options — the price difference can be significant.



Labor

Charged by the hour at a shop rate (\$80–\$180/hr). The hours are based on "flat rate" — industry time guides. Ask the shop what flat rate they're using and how many hours were billed.



Fees & Shop Supplies

"Shop supply" fees, hazmat fees, environmental fees — often added as a percentage of the total. These are semi-negotiable. Ask what they cover.

AJSS First Rule: Always Get 3 Estimates

For any repair over \$300, get estimates from at least 3 shops before authorizing work. Price variation of 40–60% for the same job is common. Never let urgency rush you into the first estimate.

CHAPTER 2

Red Flags on Any Estimate

These are warning signs that a shop may be padding the bill or taking advantage of you.



Vague or missing line items

"Misc. parts" or "general labor" with no breakdown. Every item should be itemized with part number, labor hours, and rate. Refuse to authorize work on a lump-sum estimate.



Pressure to approve immediately

"This price is only good today" or "we need to start now" are sales tactics. A legitimate shop will give you time to review and compare. Walk away if you feel pressured.



No written estimate offered

In most states, a shop must provide a written estimate before beginning any work. Verbal-only quotes protect no one. Always get it in writing.



Excessive "recommended" add-ons

A list of 6–10 additional services when you came in for one thing. Some may be legitimate — many are upsells. Ask which are required vs. optional for safety and compare prices.



Labor hours that don't match flat-rate guides

A brake pad replacement on most vehicles is 1–2 flat-rate hours. If a shop is billing 4 hours, ask them to show you their flat-rate source. Guides like Mitchell or Chilton are the standard.



Good sign: A shop that shows you the old part, explains the repair, and gives you a written estimate without being asked is worth trusting.

CHAPTER 3

How to Compare Estimates Side by Side

Use this framework whenever you have two or more estimates for the same repair.

Line Item	Shop A	Shop B	Shop C
Part name & number			
OEM / Aftermarket / Reman?			
Parts cost	\$	\$	\$
Labor hours billed			
Labor rate (\$/hr)			
Labor cost	\$	\$	\$
Shop supply / fees	\$	\$	\$
TOTAL	\$	\$	\$

Pro Tips

- Compare part quality — OEM always costs more
- Check labor hours against each other first
- Ask if shop fees are % or flat
- Ask about warranty on parts & labor

Watch Out

- Cheapest isn't always best
- Verify part quality matches
- Low labor hours can mean shortcuts
- No warranty = walk away

CHAPTER 4

Negotiation Scripts That Actually Work

Use these word-for-word phrases to push back professionally — without damaging the relationship.

When the price seems high:

"I've gotten a couple of other estimates and yours is higher. Is there any flexibility on the parts cost or labor hours?"

When they add unexpected items:

"Can you show me on the car why this additional repair is needed? I'd like to see it before I authorize anything beyond the original estimate."

When asking about parts options:

"What's the price difference between OEM and a quality aftermarket part for this repair? And what warranty comes with each?"

When you need more time:

"I appreciate the quote. I want to review it carefully before I authorize — I'll follow up by end of day. Is that workable?"

Remember: Asking is not confrontational

Any reputable shop expects informed customers. If a shop gets defensive when you ask reasonable questions, that tells you something important about how they operate.

QUICK REFERENCE

Before You Authorize Any Repair

☐ Got a written, itemized estimate

☐ Compared at least 3 estimates

☐ Checked labor hours against flat-rate guide

☐ Asked about OEM vs. aftermarket parts

☐ Confirmed warranty on parts AND labor

☐ Reviewed all shop supply / misc. fees

☐ Not pressured to decide immediately

☐ Add-ons assessed: needed vs. upsell

Still unsure? A second opinion from a vendor-neutral advisor can save you hundreds. AJSS Auto Consulting reviews estimates on your behalf — we have no shop affiliation and no reason to recommend anything other than what's right for your vehicle and budget.



Not Sure About Your Estimate?

Let an expert review it with you. AJSS Auto Consulting provides vendor-neutral estimate reviews — we have no shop affiliations and no interest in upselling you anything.

QUICK REVIEW

\$50

30-Minute Session

- ✓ Estimate line-item review
- ✓ Red flag identification
- ✓ Vendor-neutral advice
- ✓ No upsells — ever

MOST POPULAR

FULL DEEP DIVE

\$125

1-Hour Session

- ✓ Full estimate breakdown
- ✓ Compare multiple estimates
- ✓ Negotiation strategy
- ✓ Vendor-neutral advice

Book your session at ajssautoconsultingllc.com — all sessions conducted by phone or video. Bring your estimate and we'll walk through it together.