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Automotive training used to be a more common part of our society. Shop class was a commonly offered elective in high schools nationwide, ensuring that most boys knew their way around a car's engine bay. Additionally, cars relied more on mechanical principles, rather than computerized systems. As a result, when a car broke down, the owner was much more likely to know how to fix it themselves, or at least have a friend or a family member who could fix it for them.

The situation has changed dramatically over the years. Today's cars are much more complex, and their owners are much less likely to have had any automotive training. As a result, dealerships and garages are repairing a higher percentage of cars than ever before, and mechanics' rates have risen in accordance with the increased necessity of their services.

Those who dislike the situation have another option. With a little automotive training, most people can perform more of the routine maintenance on their cars, reducing the expenses associated with car maintenance and allowing them the satisfaction of a job well done.

An oil change is an example of routine maintenance that frequently costs car owners far more than they need to spend. An oil change is a fairly simple procedure in most cars, requiring only enough automotive training for the individual to know the location of the oil filter and drain plug. A basic car care class should teach car owners how to locate major components under the hood and perform simple maintenance tasks, as well as imparting valuable tips for beginning do-it-yourselfers. For example, a good introductory class should warn students to beware of screwing a bolt or screw in crooked, known as crossing the threads.

A basic tune up is another routine maintenance task that do-it-yourselfers should be able to handle with a little automotive training. A basic tune up usually consists of changing the air filter, spark plugs, plug wires, distributor cap and rotor, and positive crankcase valve (PCV). Depending on the car and the mileage recommendations on the components, a basic tune up can also include replacing the fuel filter and/or the oxygen sensor. Rubber parts, such as drive belts and radiator hoses, may also be checked and replaced during a tune up. On most cars, these parts are easily accessed and require only a basic understanding of automotive functions.

A do-it-yourselfer who has had basic automotive training can also replace his or her own brakes. Changing the brake pads on a car is typically a dirty but simple job, requiring only a basic understanding of the braking components on a car. Additionally, there are numerous routine maintenance and repair jobs that an intermediate level amateur mechanic can usually handle on his or her own, such as replacing a battery, alternator, starter, timing belt, and many other components.

Of course, a significant advantage of having automotive training is that dealerships and garages cannot take advantage of you by recommending maintenance that may not actually need to be done. A basic understanding of auto mechanics will enable you to intelligently discuss any problems with your mechanic, understand what he or she is talking about, and recognize when his or her recommendations are exaggerated or downright unnecessary.

Obviously, knowing the basics of how a car operates can be extremely beneficial, saving you money in more ways than one. Beginning automotive training classes are usually offered at your local auto tech school or community college. Whether you intend to venture a few repairs on your own, or you simply want to be able to hold your own with your mechanic, taking a car care class ensures that you will not be a victim of your own ignorance.

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