

# Do you understand your car service invoice?

After taking your car in for a service, have you ever looked at the invoice carefully and wondered what all the line items are?



Dewald Ranft, chairman of the Motor Industry Workshop Association (MIWA)

Dewald Ranft, chairman of the Motor Industry Workshop Association (MIWA), a proud association of the Retail Motor Industry Organisation (RMI), says these days with so many people struggling financially, it is more important than ever to understand what you are paying for and to take your car to an accredited workshop.

He explains that certain items used when servicing a vehicle fall within a general consumables charge.

“Items that would typically fall within this category are bought in bulk and used during the repair process such as rags, grease, cable ties, silicone sprays etc. The reason these are grouped into one charge is because to name each individual item would be impractical and invoices would be several pages long. It is much like when you go into hospital for an operation. These consumables are also grouped together for convenience,” he says.

However, he points out that other items such as filters, brake pads, wiper blades, oil etc. must be specified as separate items on your bill. "These items do not fall within the general consumables charge and should be itemised so you can see exactly what you are being charged for. You should also see a line item specifying a labour rate and a charge for the repair work conducted. Many workshops have a predetermined charge for many tasks so these can even be estimated upfront."

Ranft says you can troubleshoot your repair after it's done without turning a wrench and it is within the vehicle owner's right to query any item on the invoice that may be unclear. "A reputable workshop will be transparent and easily be able to answer your questions. I highly recommend using a MIWA-accredited workshop because if there are any discrepancies on the bill you can raise the issue with MIWA and an investigation will follow. It's good to have a fail-safe in place," he says.

He adds that the invoice should correlate with the quote given ahead of the service, within reason. "Obviously once a mechanic has been able to take a good look at the vehicle after the initial quote, there are sometimes additional things that need fixing. The mechanic however needs to inform you, before doing the work, of any substantial charges that may be additional, over and above the initial quote. Written acceptance from the vehicle owner needs to be obtained before the workshop may proceed with the required repairs. Once again, if this is not the case, it is important that the vehicle owner reports the workshop to MIWA for investigation."

With most people watching their expenses these days, Ranft believes it's important to get educated on car maintenance costs. "Don't be afraid to speak to your mechanic and ask questions about your car maintenance and the most cost-effective way of keeping your vehicle in tip-top condition. Remember that regular maintenance will extend the life of your vehicle and save you money in the long run," he concludes.

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