

Auto Repair

By Karen Zhang

在中国，人们保养爱车的方式通常是将车擦亮，保持车体干净。而在美国，人们更注重的是汽车性能方面的维护与保养，将车定期送检是大多数车主都会做的一件事。

As people often say, America is a mobile nation on four wheels. Without a car it is nearly impossible to go around at your desire. However, like anywhere else being a car owner, one needs to take responsibility as well. Americans pay a lot of attention to their cars, especially their mechanical maintenance^[维修, 保养].

An annual vehicle registration is required nationwide with various requirements. One of them is that the vehicle must pass an emissions test^[排放测试] before a new registration is issued. An oil change is recommended after about 3,000—5,000 miles. You probably will see more Americans going work on their cars at leisure or having their cars checked at body shops than in China.

I notice that Chinese car owners care more about polishing^[擦亮] their beloved cars and having them washed too often compared to Americans. Auto repair in America definitely generates more revenue^[收入]. And my experience is proof of it.

My first car was a used 2002 Chevy Cavalier. It was a really old car with over 116,000 miles on it upon my purchase. I thought the car would be fine if I didn't drive it too often. Not true. If a dog needs a daily walk, a car needs a ride frequently. Thanks to the treacherous^[危险的] winter weather in Pittsburgh, my car went to the garage for a checkup nearly once a month. And I must have become one of the garage's most frequent customers. My car suffered everything from a flat tire^[轮胎] to fuel pump damage, oil changes to emissions

Karen in America

inspections. I was amazed at how much auto mechanical jargon^[术语] I learned during those days. But obviously I am still a layman^[门外汉] about cars.

I have a theory that the car owners who end up paying a lot for any services are usually the most unknowledgeable. To make sure I am not one of them when consulting with the repairmen, I downloaded an owner's manual of my car model from the Internet. I prepared my questions the night before. But it didn't help much. New problem always cropped up beyond my knowledge. Outside the repairmen, who else can I turn to for help even though it'd cost me an arm and a leg?

A major repair on a car is like a serious operation on a human. In America, labor cost for almost everything are much higher than in China. Looking at the bill that cost over 300 dollars, I figured aside from the sales tax, labor itself had taken up nearly one third of the total cost. The lesson from that major repair on my first car was: I have to pray not only for good health, but also for my car to stay in good shape. 🍀

