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Car care in the autumn months helps you get ready for winter conditions, of course, but regular maintenance has other benefits as well.

According to the experts at the nonprofit National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence, vehicle owners will benefit from longer vehicle life, increased gasoline mileage and better resale value. If you are not a do-it-yourselfer, try the following tips from ASE to help locate a good automotive repair facility as you shop for auto service this fall.

* Ask your friends and associates for their recommendations or consult local consumer groups.

* Arrange for alternate transportation in advance so you will not feel forced to choose a shop based solely on location.

* Look for a neat, well-organized facility, with vehicles in the parking lot equal in value to your own and modern equipment in the service bays.

* Look for a courteous staff, with a service consultant or technicians willing to answer your questions.

* Look for policies regarding estimated repair costs, diagnostic fees, guarantees and acceptable methods of payment.

* Ask whether the repair facility specializes or usually handles your type of repair work.

* Look for signs of professionalism in the customer service area, such as civic, community or customer service awards.

* Look for evidence of qualified technicians: trade-school diplomas, certificates of advanced course work and certifications by ASE indicate the presence of professional, trained technicians.

* Look for the ASE sign, which indicates the shop employs ASE-certified technicians. They wear blue and white ASE shoulder insignia and carry credentials listing their exact areas of certification. Facilities with a high percentage of ASE-certified professionals may also be members of ASE's Blue Seal of Excellence Recognition Program.

The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence was founded in 1972 as a nonprofit, independent organization dedicated to improving the quality of automotive service and repair through the voluntary testing and certification of automotive technicians.

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