

BODYSHOPS & BODYWORK - KEEPING YOUR BODY BEAUTIFUL



The thought of visiting a bodyshop is one that most of us would prefer to forgo. Yet accidents do happen and when they do, it's just as well to know who to turn to.

The first thing to remember is that not all bodyshops are the same. Anyone can patch your car up with a hammer and a touch of filler but in the long run, there's little doubt that going this route will cost you more than you save.

Today's cars actually need sophisticated equipment to get them back to pristine condition, particularly if the accident damage has been substantial. Ask the workshop quoting on your vehicle what kind of tooling they have and check that their staff are properly trained to deal with your particular make and model.

Secondly, make sure that you get a number of quotes before deciding. Ask if the company you have in mind is affiliated to any trade or motoring organisations. Find out if they work regularly for any of the well known franchised dealerships.

Finally, it's worth checking out the customer service provided. Is there any possibility of a loan car while your vehicle is off the road? Will the workshop offer a free collection and delivery service? A little time on the phone could save you a lot of money - and a great deal of hassle.

Of course, accidents aren't the only reason for a visit to the bodyshop. Older cars in particular will suffer the effects of rain, snow, ice and sleet. Without preventive maintenance, your bodywork may well end up in a sorry state.

The following easy steps should help prevent longterm bodywork damage:

- Wash beneath the bodywork and around the wheelarches to remove salt
- Clean and polish the paintwork with a good quality polish and for extra protection, add a coat of gloss protectant. Resist the temptation to cutback the paint, however bad it looks: modern paints do not need aggressive treatment
- Treat all exterior plastics and rubber with a suitable dressing - you may find that some plastic surfaces have faded
- Wash regularly with a genuine car shampoo to keep the car in top shape. Don't use household dishwashing liquid, as this is designed to cut through grease and is too aggressive for car paintwork.