

OEM VS AFTERMARKET PARTS

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Your car broke down and now you need repairs and a new part or parts. Maybe you've always gone to the dealership for maintenance and repairs. Maybe it's been a trusted mechanic. In either case, you may be wondering if you should be getting Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) parts or aftermarket parts when your car is repaired.

When your vehicle is repaired at the dealership, you will get OEM parts. However, when you go to an independent repair shop, although you will most likely get aftermarket parts, OEM parts are a possibility as well.

So, which is better? OEM or aftermarket parts? And should you always insist on one or the other? The most accurate answer is it depends. When working with a trusted repair shop or mechanic and for most mechanical repairs, an aftermarket part will likely be the same or better than the OEM part. But I'm getting ahead of myself. First, let's look at the basics of both OEM and aftermarket parts.

What Are OEM Parts and Aftermarket Parts?

OEM Parts

- OEM parts are simply parts that were made by the vehicle's manufacturer or parts that the manufacturer authorized a third-party to supply as OEM parts.
- OEM replacement parts will match the parts that came with your vehicle when it came off the assembly line and will be of the same quality.
- Both dealerships and independent repair shops can sell them.

Aftermarket Parts

- Are vehicle parts that are not manufactured or sourced by the vehicle's manufacturer
- Designed to be functionally equivalent
- Usually available at a lower cost than the OEM.
- Many aftermarket parts are designed to function better than the original.

Where Can You Buy OEM or Aftermarket Parts?

- Dealerships only offer OEM parts.
- Because they are an authorized representative of the manufacturer, there is no reason to offer lower-cost or different options for parts.
- Independent repair shops often offer both OEM and aftermarket parts,
- Independent repair shops give you options usually saving you money.
- About 80% of independent shops do use aftermarket parts

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- Be sure to ask questions and know what you're paying for.

Common Myths About Aftermarket Parts

- The first common myth about aftermarket parts is that using them will void your vehicle's warranty. As long as the aftermarket parts being used are direct replacement parts, they will not void your vehicle's warranty.
- The second common myth is that aftermarket parts cost less money because they are inferior products. While this can be true, many companies make aftermarket parts that are as good or even better than the OEM parts.
- Work with a reputable shop or mechanic who knows which aftermarket parts are of good quality.

Why Are Aftermarket Parts a Good Choice?

Most of the time, choosing to get aftermarkets is a good choice. But why?

- First, and for many people, most importantly, aftermarket parts almost always cost less than OEM parts – sometimes up to 50% less!
- The second reason aftermarket parts are a good choice is selection.
- While OEM parts can only be made by one manufacturer, the majority of aftermarket parts are produced by many manufacturers. This is one of the key reasons that aftermarket parts are usually cheaper than OEM parts – more choices mean more competition.

Finally, quality is another reason aftermarket parts are a good choice.

- Quality can vary based on the part's manufacturer and the type of part
- If you're working with a reputable repair shop and/or mechanic, they will probably find the quality parts.
- It's common to find a brand-name aftermarket part where the quality meets or surpasses its OEM version?
- Aftermarket parts and OEM parts are frequently the same parts, just with different branding or labels.

For example,

- The Chevrolet Silverado Z71. This truck has special shocks that are installed at the factory. The brand of those OEM shocks is Rancho. If you look at the aftermarket versions of shocks for the Z71, there is a brand called Monroe. Both Monroe and Rancho are owned by Tenneco, who makes many of the same parts under both brand names!
- Brake pads from GRI Engineering. This company manufactures both OEM and aftermarket brake pads for many vehicles – on the same factory assembly line! If you'd like to read more about this, [check out this article](#).

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Some aftermarket parts are even better than the OEM parts. This can be because the companies have reverse-engineered their parts and improved on them. Also, aftermarket auto parts manufacturers keep up with technological changes so that they can stay competitive, while vehicle manufacturers do not since they don't have an incentive to. Once their vehicle is being sold and/or not being produced anymore, it doesn't make financial sense to keep trying to improve the OEM parts.

How to Make Sure You Get Good Quality Aftermarket Parts

So now that you're considering aftermarket parts for your next repair, how do you make sure to get good quality parts? Start by asking a trusted repair shop or mechanic. Next, if your vehicle is being repaired and the shop tells you what part needs to be replaced, ask for the brand name so you can look for consumer reviews online.

How to Save When Your Vehicle Needs Repairs

Have you considered what happens when your vehicle needs repairs? If your original warranty has expired and you don't have an [extended vehicle warranty](#) or a vehicle protection plan, you will have to pay for 100% of the costs to fix your vehicle.

If you're in this situation, the independent repair shop, instead of the dealership, may be a good choice. You're very likely to save money because using aftermarket parts will be an option.

If you have a vehicle protection plan you can save even more money because parts and labor for covered repairs will be paid by your plan Administrator. However, do keep in mind that most protection plan contracts allow the plan administrators to substitute aftermarket parts for OEM.

If you have the repairs made at the dealership and if they insist on installing an OEM part after the Administrator has authorized a lesser amount for a quality aftermarket part, you may wind up paying the difference out-of-pocket. With that in mind, you might want to give the independent repair facility consideration.