
How to Get a Quality Restoration

If you are seeking a restoration shop to restore an old car or truck, here are a few tips to help you get the best quality with the fewest number of problems.

1 – Before your search for a restorer begins, you must decide how you want your car restored. Do you want a 100-point, concours-perfect automobile or a nice street restoration?

2 – Visit at least three or four different shops during working hours. This will give you a good idea of how a restoration shop operates and the skill level of its work force. Take a detailed look at the work being performed on the cars undergoing restoration.

3 – Always keep in mind that restoration firms are not body shops, and body shops are not restoration firms. They are two distinctly different types of business.

4 – Try to deal with a shop that specializes in your particular car make and/or model.

Sometimes, dealing with non-specialists will result in higher restoration costs because they take longer to do things due to their unfamiliarity with the car.

5 – It is also important for you to inspect a couple of vehicles that the restorer has completed, and ask for at least three references from former customers.

6 – Because each restoration is unique, a program must be outlined that is tailored to the specific requirements of your car.

7 – Be prepared: Most restorers have a clause in their contracts that states that an additional charge will be incurred if extra work is required.

8 – Restorers who specialize in a particular model car know exactly how many hours of labor it will take them to restore that car; hence, the end result will be a superior restoration that's also less expensive.

9 – Being charged an hourly rate is the most expensive way to pay for a restoration. But if you want the absolute highest quality possible, there is no alternative, particularly from the restorer's perspective, since he will have to put in endless hours of labor until every single aspect of the car is perfect.

10 – Be skeptical of the shop that will restore your car for a price that seems

too good to be true. Once they have your car apart, if the work is much more extensive than they anticipated (and it usually is), you can be sure they will cut corners in places you won't notice.

11 – Set a budget with the shop owner prior to the start of the project, and make sure everything you want is in writing. He should be flexible regarding payment plans.

12 – Whatever estimate you're given for the work, add a minimum contingency of 20%. This way, when the time comes to pay the bills, you won't be surprised.

13 – Irrespective of your car's value, or its rarity, carry full insurance coverage on the car while it's being restored at the shop and while it is being transported.

14 – Take photographs of the entire restoration. This documentation will be extremely valuable when you need to substantiate your claimed ground-up restoration should you decide to sell the car at a later date or to make an insurance claim.

15 – Prior to delivering your car to the restorer's workshop, take inventory of each and every part, and note whether it's good, broken or missing. Take note of the condition of all the glass, including all scratches and chips. This will help avoid misunderstandings between you and the restorer later on.

16 – During the restoration, if you have any questions regarding the shop's invoices, inquire at once. If the restorer cannot justify his expenses, order him to stop all work immediately and iron out the problem before the charges get out of hand.

17 – While your car is undergoing restoration, keep in touch with the shop and try to visit as often as possible.

18 – Be friendly to the people who are restoring your car and let them know how much you appreciate their work.

19 – When the restoration of your car is finished, it should be handed over to you after the restorer has given it an extensive road test to see if everything performs as it should. There should be no problems at all.

20 – You should also get some sort of a warranty on mechanicals and body and paint. It's usually 10,000 miles and one year, respectively.

21 – Before you take your "new" vehicle out on the road, get it appraised by a professional appraiser; then have it properly insured.

Once your car is finished and it's home, drive it and enjoy it. That's the whole reason why you had it restored in the first place.