DO YOUR RESEARCH
Ask your friends and family for technicians they trust, and check with BBB. You can read past customer reviews, and view their rating. Be sure to check with the Bureau of Automotive Repair for license information at bar.ca.gov, and look for any certificates.

An Automotive Service Excellence certificate is not a requirement, but it indicates that some or all of the technicians have met basic standards of knowledge and competence in specific technical areas.

MAINTAIN YOUR CAR
Read your vehicle’s manual for the automakers suggested routine maintenance schedule to keep your car running in tip top shape. This will tell you things like what oil to use, when to replace fluids, spark plugs, etc. Pay extra attention to any unusual sounds or smells coming from your car, and any lights that are staying on. If any of these are happening to your car, call your service professional and they can help you decide whether to drive your car, or tow it into the shop for service.

LEAVE IT UP TO THE PROFESSIONALS
Describe what problems you are experiencing to the technician, but ultimately let them diagnose what is wrong with your car. Don’t be afraid to ask your technician to take a drive with you. Intermittent problems often require extra time to diagnose, so be prepared to leave it overnight or longer.

APPROVE THE ESTIMATE
Accurate estimates for routine maintenance service intervals such as oil changes, transmission service, etc. are usually right on.

Repair estimates often start with a base diagnostic charge. Your professional technician will test components and systems: what’s working, marginally working, not working and why, before giving you an estimate to repair the problem(s). Revised estimates are common. A final repair estimate depends on an experienced professional’s ability to access a daunting number of current scan tools, software updates, service subscriptions, specialty tools and advanced technical training that helps them interpret all of the data.

Shops are required to document your approval of an estimate before beginning repairs.

PAY ATTENTION WHEN PICKING UP YOUR CAR
When you pick up your car, get a complete and detailed written summary describing everything the technician did, and ask them to go over it with you. Be sure to save all your paperwork in case there is an issue down the road.

For more trusted tips, visit bbb.org