

SHOULD YOU DIY automotive repairs?



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The term do-it-yourself (DIY) has been used for many activities you and I do instead of paying others to do

it for us: decorating, making things, repairing things and even cooking/baking—because I surely do those myself! I would even go out on a limb and say that I am a professional DIYer! I love everything about it—the challenge, the creativity, the satisfaction of a job well done and happy people who get to enjoy the fruits of my labor. I garden, paint, tile, paint, cook/bake and alter recipes to be gluten free, paint, decorate (automotive shops, homes and cakes), paint, repurpose furniture, paint, and design fun projects. Oh, did I mention paint? I paint everything: walls, furniture, floors, stairs, art, frames, drawer pulls ... you name it, I paint it. I suppose you could call me a paint-aholic!

My stepfather, Mike, always jokes that my painting is like painting the Golden Gate Bridge: as soon as it's finished, it starts all over again. I guess you could say it's never really done. It's the same with me. I basically paint every room

in my house and then start over! It's amazing how you can change an entire room with a new paint color and it gives me great joy to do it!

Not only do I do many DIY projects myself, but I am often a cheerleader for others. I've encouraged novice cooks to grow in their skills, hesitant painters to try a new color, and newbie cake decorators to give it a shot. I want you to explore new things, be creative, do so many different things yourself and maybe even save some money.

How about you? What sorts of DIY projects have you done? What sorts of things are on your list in the future? Do you research before you begin something for the first time? How daring are you? Perhaps most importantly, do you know your limitations?

With all that I enjoy doing and have tried, I definitely know when something is beyond my skill level. Case in point: two months ago when I had a "simple" idea to make the exterior wall behind my fireplace in the garage pretty. In order to do this, I needed to make the wall flat, which meant removing what looked like the fireplace access panel. Thankfully, my husband was by my side during my "simple" project because my friends, it wasn't an access panel at all. It was an ugly board holding in rotted

drywall and when we removed it, vermiculate started pouring out! My husband and I just looked at each other wondering about the can of worms we just opened! Long story short ... we had to call in the professionals!

One of the biggest steps to any DIY project is to know when not to do it yourself. Painting a wretched color on a wall is not the end of the world—you just paint it a different color. Planting a perennial in a spot that's too shady is not a big deal—you just move it to a place with more sun. Trying a new recipe that turns out disastrous isn't life threatening—you just learn from your mistake and make it better next time (and apologize to you family for the terrible taste in their mouths). Doing a bad tile job—well, this one could get expensive if you need to redo it, but I sure bet you'll learn to either do it better or know that it's just not in your wheelhouse to do it yourself and call a professional.

This brings me to the whole point of this article: DIY automotive repairs. Let's face it, today's automobiles are much more complex than they used to be. Performing "simple" repairs and maintenance are not so simple any more. There are so many things to consider and so many things that can go wrong. Before performing any service under the hood or under the car here are some things to consider:

Do you have mechanical knowledge and knowhow?

A basic knowledge of how things work is needed before performing any automotive job. But there is so much more. A professional has a trained eye and will look for things you may not



Photo courtesy of Mike Williams

My stepfather, Mike by the Golden Gate Bridge.

They will assess entire systems, not just the part of the system you are repairing or replacing. They know the right quality parts to use for your particular vehicle and how to disassemble and reassemble it properly. Failing to understand these things and possibly making a mistake can not only affect the outcome of the job and cost more to correct, but can also have serious safety consequences for you or others on the roadway. If you are not completely confident in what you are doing mechanically, I urge you to err on the side of caution and call in the professionals!

Do you have the proper equipment and tools to perform the service? Are they in good working condition?

Elevating a vehicle and then getting under it can be a risky thing if your equipment is not safe, and if the wrong tools are used or the parts are not

secured correctly after installation of a new or repaired part, it could have catastrophic consequences.

Do you know where all of the fluids are located and what kinds of fluids to use to replace old ones?

It may make some of you car repair veterans giggle a bit, but my mechanics have seen people both drain the wrong fluids and add the wrong fluids. This could cause considerable damage to your vehicle and may cost a whole lot more to fix than the money you saved trying to do it yourself.

There are so many things to consider before taking on any DIY project. But because automobiles have become so complex and making a mistake could have detrimental consequences, I urge you to consider all of this before doing any automotive DIY repairs or maintenance services.