

## Top 10 Problems Cars Develop

Modern cars have become increasingly reliable and tend to have much fewer issues than just 10 years ago. Within our own garage we have observed that cars failed MOTs around 55% of the time when we opened in 2011. Fast forward to 2020 and cars only fail MOTs 34% of the time.

Whilst an MOT is a good annual safety check for vehicles that have been registered for 3 years or more, they are only a basic assessment and will not prevent the vast majority of issues that we observe day in and day out.

Some problems that cars develop can be prevented with good maintenance, others are much more difficult to stop. However, Under The Bonnet is here to guide you through the top 10 issues that we observe with customer cars and offer some advice that you may like to consider.

If we could offer one piece of advice, it would be: 'If a car starts developing a problem, or the dashboard shows a warning light, it is extremely unlikely to resolve itself. It is nearly ALWAYS more expensive to wait before having your car looked at.'

So, the Top 10 problems that Under The Bonnet observe are:

### **1. Cars not being serviced according to the manufacturer's recommended schedule**

This is by far the most common problem seen and is one that can lead to premature wear of very expensive engine components. The single most important thing you can do to optimise engine life is to have a regular oil change. Oil is the lubricant between very hot and fast moving parts and, inevitably, tiny pieces of engine metal are eroded and end up in the engine oil. Over a period of time, these tiny fragments of metal then start to increase the level of engine wear by increasing friction. Regular oil changes mean that these metal fragments do not permanently end up in the engine. Oil changes are very inexpensive and some customers are even happy to do it themselves!

### **2. Warning Lights**

Modern cars have an array of warning lights and warning messages that let the driver know that there is a potential issue. Some of these are very specific and advise the exact issue, others are more general and will require a diagnostic assessment. Good news, Under The Bonnet offers a free diagnostic tool plug-in to check fault codes.

### **3. Worn Brake Pads**

Brake pads are designed to press against the brake disc in order to slow down the wheels and therefore the car. Over a period of use, the brake discs will wear down and eventually wear out. Many modern cars have brake pad sensors which advise when they should be replaced, others don't. It is vital to replace worn pads otherwise you will eventually hear metal on metal noise when braking – this means that your much more expensive brake discs are being unnecessarily damaged. Brake pads usually cost around 30% of a brake disc so it is much less costly to replace brake pads as soon as it is needed.

#### **4. Wrongly Inflated Tyres**

Tyres that are either under-inflated or over-inflated will lead to premature wear of the tyre and costly replacement with most tyres costing 'per corner' between £30 to £300 depending on their size and quality. Having the wrong tyre pressure can lead to wear at twice the rate of those with the correct manufacturer's recommended pressure. It's an easy thing to check yourself at no cost!

#### **5. Vibrating or Shaking Steering Wheel**

There are many different reasons why the steering wheel might not feel smooth when driving and it will need an experienced mechanic to assess. The most common cause is an issue with wheel balance (which can also lead to similar issues as explained for wrongly inflated tyres) which can be rectified at relatively low cost. More expensive reasons might be an issue with the suspension system, wheel bearings or other balance issues. It is important to get this checked to ensure your vehicle remains safe to drive.

#### **6. Faulty Sensors**

This can be related to the second problem on our list, but the large number of sensors in a modern car inevitably means that one might fail every now and again. One of the most common fault is when one of the mass air or fuel sensors fails. Some sensor are relatively inexpensive to replace whilst others may cost more and take more time to replace.

#### **7. Incorrect Wheel Balance**

Tyres are the only contact the vehicle has with the road and it is imperative that their efficiency is optimised to ensure correct braking (and to reduce the cost of maintaining your car!). As mentioned previously, correct tyre pressure is vital, but it is also important to ensure that they are aligned both when viewed from the front (direction of vehicle travel) and from above (whether they are leaning). Correct alignment of these will prolong tyre wear, give smoother driving and support good braking distance.

#### **8. Clutch Issues**

The clutch is your link with the gearbox and enables you to change gears when driving. The clutch is essentially two metal plates that are either in contact when you are in gear or are separated when you depress the clutch pedal. Metal will, sooner or later, always wear which can lead to slipping clutches or even burnt out clutches.

#### **9. Battery or Alternator Issues**

Batteries can go flat for a number of reasons. The simplest issue to rectify is when the owner has inadvertently left a light on, for example overnight, and the battery has lost its charge. Usually a jump start will get the car started and the battery will usually recharge after around 20-30 minutes of driving (depending on driving conditions). The next most common reason for a battery being flat is simply that it is too old and can no longer hold its charge – this is a phenomenon that all batteries exhibit. Old batteries can usually be replaced quickly and at an acceptable cost. The final reason for a battery going flat is when the alternator has failed. Alternators are the devices that enable the engine to convert kinetic energy (movement) in to electrical charge (the battery).

#### **10. Electrical Issues**

These are usually the most annoying fault for both you (the customer) and us (the mechanic). Modern cars possess an array of electrical systems for batteries, lights, entertainment systems, sensors, etc and often these can be difficult to quickly diagnose and often we need to go through a series of checks to identify and isolate the issue. Sometimes these can be related to a blown fuse, other times to faulty wires and even damaged sensors.

Whilst there are many issues and problems that can occur with cars, your mechanic at Under The Bonnet is here to help you. We are always happy to look at your vehicle and give you a no-obligation quote. As mentioned above, we also offer free computer diagnostic connection and fault code analysis. Please contact [service@underthebonnet.net](mailto:service@underthebonnet.net) or phone us on 01604 499790 for further information.