

EEK

Car maintenance is like baking a cake

Did you know that maintaining your car is like baking a cake? According to a veteran technician who now runs a diagnostic car clinic, just as baking is an art, so is car maintenance and not knowing enough about our cars, is costing us a lot of money.

A study done by a provincial consumer protection office revealed that a compact car costs its owner an average of \$3,000 a year for insurance, licencing, repairs, gas, and depreciation.

You could take a lot of taxis for that kind of money, but very few of us seem to want to part with the convenience of instant mobility.

But, what has baking a cake got to do with car maintenance? Gilbert Gagnon, whom we interviewed recently, points out that when you've been baking for a while you know all the tricks for avoiding a failure. Experienced cooks take that accomplishment for granted. But ask most of us to find the air filter on the car's engine and we wince at the idea that we should even know where the engine is.

Gilbert Gagnon claims that most of the people he sees spend about \$800 to \$1,000 a year on repairs—much of which could be saved by gaining some knowledge of the vehicle and what it needs in the way of TLC to run smoothly.

For instance, most of us are pretty faithful to the twice yearly tune-up. We assume that whatever needs to be oiled has been oiled, and that's that until the next time.

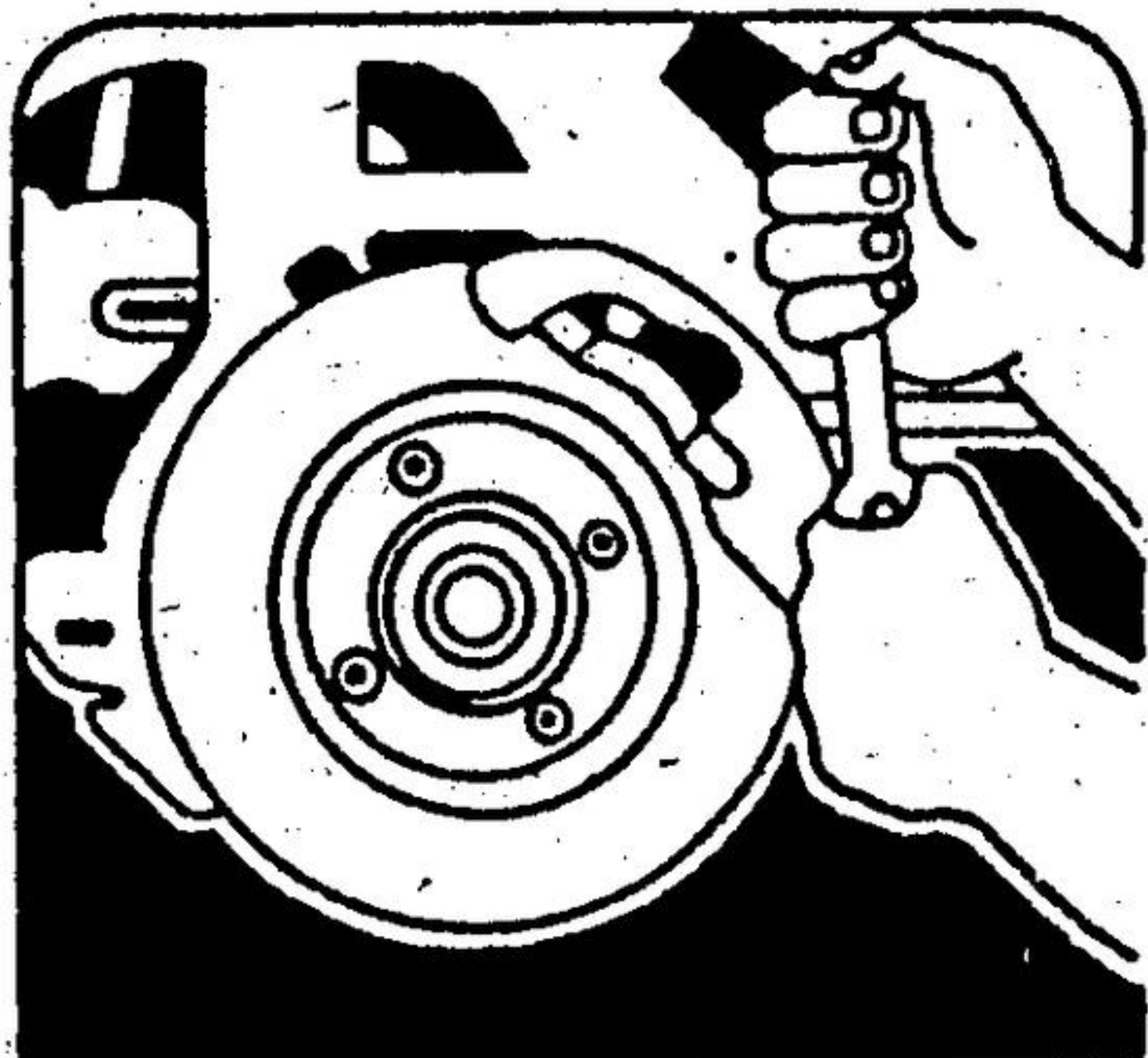
Not so! Cars need regular though simple maintenance to keep parts from wearing out. In the summer, engine oil

should be changed every two months along with the oil filter itself. In winter this should be done every month. The kind of oil is also crucial to maintenance. In the summer a heavy oil (Gagnon suggests 10W30); in winter a lighter lubricant, 5W20 is recommended.

Changing oil frequently is the key to maintaining an engine because old oil loses its viscosity and so parts begin rubbing together, heating up and wearing out. Some products are advertised to provide a protective varnish-like coating to preserve the engine but Gagnon is against these because they tend to seal the natural apertures and prevent oil from flowing through.

He also says money can be saved and rust proofing accomplished by having the underbody of a car coated with a mixture of oil and grease. This can be done very easily, lasts a long time and costs no more than \$50 to \$75. Whereas the treatments for rust proofing underbodies normally cost \$300 although they are sometimes guaranteed for five years.

I'll leave you to wash the grease off your hands and will be back later with more tips on how to stretch your automotive dollar.



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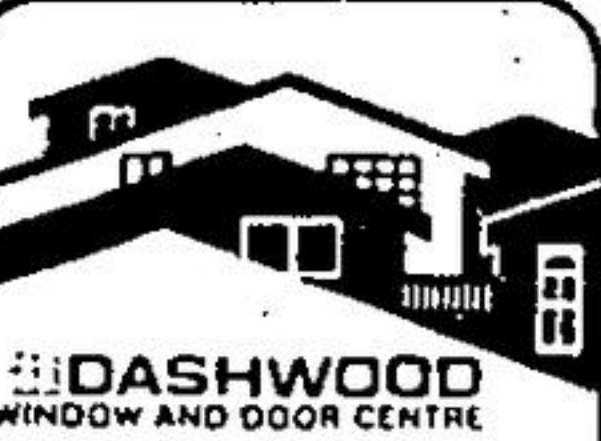


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