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## Auto train cost

Spending more than \$400 annually on maintenance and repairs may sound like a lot, but it's nothing compared to the added expense of buying a new car, especially if your current car is paid off. In fact, by some estimates, every five years you drive your car after paying it off saves you the monetary equivalent of a new car.To understand how, let's compare a new car to a paid-off car with standard maintenance. To make it interesting, let's stack the deck in the new car's favor by saying that you drive 24,000 miles (38,624 kilometers) per year, which is double the national average. In five years, that adds up to 120,000 miles (193,121 kilometers) under your wheels, which translates to 35 to 40 oil changes. At \$40 apiece, you're looking at \$1,400 to \$1,600 -- let's call it \$1,500. Figure in another \$2,200 for miscellaneous service costs (filters, hoses, tire rotations and so on) and another \$1,500 for a few major items like a timing belt replacement, new brakes and shock absorbers. Tally that up and you get \$5,200, or around \$1,040 per year.Now let's compare that to a new car. According to the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA), the average price of a new car sold in the United States in 2009 was \$28,966, but we'll lowball it and say you found a good deal at \$24,000 and financed \$20,000 at 7 percent interest for 48 months. That comes out to a monthly payment of just under \$479, which tallies to \$5,747 per year [source: U.S. Federal Trade Commission].In other words, for the cost of owning a new car for one year, you could own a paid-off car for five years, drive it into the ground, and still have money left over for toils.According to Consumer Reports, the average life expectancy of a new vehicle is around eight years or 150,000 miles [source: Weisbaum]. A well-maintained car also means a safer trip for you and your loved ones. And who can put a price on that?For more information about preventative auto maintenance and other related topics, follow the links on the next page. Picture this: You're buying a new car. You've found the model you want with the perfect color combination and it's in the right price range. You've made your down payment, carefully examined your financing options, and evaluated what your budget will be like with a new car payment and perhaps a change in insurance costs, too.But have you figured in the cost of maintenance for your new car? We all know that it can be expensive to keep a car in proper working order, but we don't always include that in our financial plans. Consumer Reports estimates that over five years, 4 percent of the total cost of your vehicle will be spent on repairs and maintenance. That doesn't sound like much. That is, until you have to pay for something big like a blown transmission, for example [source: Consumer Reports].According to one recent study, the average American household spent \$5,477 on gas and automotive expenses last year. \$2,208 was for gasoline, but the rest -- a whopping \$3,269 -- was for expenses like dealership maintenance, service station fixes and body shop repair. That comes out to \$272 a month, which is almost like a second car payment [source: Paskin].Hopefully you're not paying \$272 each month in maintenance. That figure is an average, which includes cars of all different makes and model years. How much you pay in the long run definitely depends on what you choose to purchase. Buy a brand-new Honda Accord or Chevrolet Impala, and your repair costs will likely be lower than if you invest in a 1960s British sports car or something similar. Remember, buying a brand new car means that a warranty will cover the cost of many repairs early on.With the country is experiencing an economic downturn, people are keeping their cars longer and maintaining them better than they may have in the recent past. Modern cars are also being built a lot more reliable than ever before, so it's not an uncommon feat for a new vehicle to go beyond 100,000 miles (160,934 kilometers). But routine maintenance can be pricey -- even when it's spread out over a few years. In fact, owners of many new trucks and sedans can expect to pay between \$1,500 and \$3,000 as they perform scheduled maintenance on their way to reaching the six-digit mileage mark [source: Helperin].If you take care of your vehicle, you'll prevent more serious (and more expensive) problems down the road. Everything from oil changes to brake pads and tire rotation could save you thousands of dollars down the line, so be sure to consult your owner's manual frequently to see what's next on your car's maintenance schedule.For more information about the cost of car ownership, follow the links on the next page. Most states, but not all, have a compulsory auto insurance law. The minimum required liability coverage levels vary, however, as do the mandatory policy benefits. Insurance in some states is governed by tort laws, in which the party found to be at fault pays the victim's medical expenses and damages (lost wages, pain and suffering and so on), while in other states, no-fault laws hold sway. There, all parties file claims and are generally compensated without requiring a fault determination. Although this largely removes the need for potentially long and costly court battles to determine fault, it also generally limits the ability of the involved parties to sue for damages. Currently, Puerto Rico and 12 states have no-fault auto insurance laws: Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania and Utah.Now let's break down the various kinds of available coverage:Liability helps shield you from the financial burden of compensating others involved in a collision for their bodily injury or property damages. In tort law states, if you're found to be at fault, all of these expenses -- including medical expenses, funeral costs, pain and suffering, lost wages, repair costs and legal costs -- could otherwise come out of your pocket. Most states require a specific level of liability insurance. The average liability premium in 2007 was \$475.43, ranging from \$251.07 in North Dakota to \$718.71 in Florida [source: National Association of Insurance Commissioners].Collision coverage, as the name implies, pays for repairs to your vehicle caused by collision with another vehicle or object. If the damage is severe enough, it may also shell out for a replacement vehicle. Although not legally required, a lender will usually oblige you to carry collision insurance for the duration of your car loan. The average collision premium in 2007 was \$300.50, ranging from \$184.72 in North Dakota to \$439.98 in the District of Columbia. Collision coverage value is limited by the market price of your car at the time of the accident [source: National Association of Insurance Commissioners].Comprehensive, coverage, also known as OTC (Other Than Collision), pays you for loss or damage caused by something other than an accident, such as a natural disaster, theft or vandalism. Like collision, OTC is usually not legally required, but will likely be a condition of your loan agreement. The average comprehensive premium in 2007 was \$135.90, ranging from \$97.23 in Oregon to \$265.85 in the District of Columbia. Comprehensive deductibles typically range from \$50 to \$500 [source: National Association of Insurance Commissioners].Underinsured/Uninsured Motoristcoverage helps pay your medical and repair/replacement costs when another party is at fault for the accident but lacks adequate insurance coverage. It's generally cheaper than other types of coverage with the same payout value.Medical helps cover medical treatment for accident-related injuries, regardless of fault. In some cases, it also covers other family members when they drive the insured car.Personal Injury Protection (PIP)pays you back for a certain amount of lost income, child care expenses and medical expenses if you're hurt in an accident. PIP provides coverage for items that you might not generally budget for and that might not be covered by medical insurance. In no-fault states, people often buy PIP to pay for medical bills. Unfortunately, dishonest doctors and clinics sometimes abuse and defraud PIP systems, billing for unnecessary and expensive procedures, which drives up coverage costs [source: Insurance Information Institute].These are only the most common types of coverage. You can also purchase policies to cover towing, roadside assistance, the cost of a car rental while your ride languishes in the shop after an accident or to protect your sound system and other in-car valuables against theft or damage.For more information about the cost of car ownership, follow the links on the next page. Auto dealership service advisers play an important role in generating revenue and profit for the service department and improving a dealership's customer satisfaction rating. They have more frequent contact with customers than vehicle sales executives and they have a major opportunity to help the dealership retain customers beyond the warranty period. An investment in service adviser training can therefore deliver a good return. Service advisers need the technical skills to understand vehicle systems and identify service requirements. They must have good communication skills to build relationships with customers and provide service technicians with clear instructions. They also require administrative skills to maintain service records, provide accurate estimates and ensure that vehicles are serviced in line with manufacturers' specifications. Service advisers have a dual role. They are responsible for understanding customers' service and repair requirements and translating those into clear instructions for service technicians. They are also responsible for maximizing the number of service hours sold. Training must therefore focus on technical and product knowledge in addition to improving sales and customer service skills. Auto manufacturers run technical training programs for service staff in franchised dealerships at all levels from technicians to service managers. In addition to basic training on vehicle systems and servicing, manufacturers provide online training programs and service bulletins to keep product knowledge up to date. Service advisers working in independent service centers may acquire their basic technical training at colleges that offer courses leading to certification in vehicle servicing. Training in sales skills for service advisers is available from independent training companies. The courses focus on important sales opportunities, such as the vehicle walk-round when the service adviser can identify and discuss other servicing or repair requirements with the customer. The courses teach the value of monitoring customer service records to send out timely reminders and the importance of good telephone techniques to increase upselling opportunities. Auto manufacturers recognize the importance of customer satisfaction in building loyalty to individual dealerships as well as loyalty to the brand. The service department is a critical area for customer satisfaction because of the frequency of customer contact. Customers may only change their cars every two or three years, or longer, but they are likely to visit the service department at least once a year for scheduled servicing or repairs. Training in customer service techniques is available from auto manufacturers as well as independent training organizations. Training programs focus on subjects such as customer reception, vehicle inspection, accurate diagnosis, estimating and service instructions, and vehicle handover. Programs also cover techniques for dealing with customer complaints.

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