



## Mercedes-Benz Service vs Independents or DIY

### Introduction

As Mercedes-Benz (MB) owners, and enthusiasts we share a passion for automobiles and automotive excellence. And through the Clubs resources we learn how to enjoy and preserve our vehicles, old and new. Mercedes-Benz engineering in conjunction with our attention to car care has positioned us to present to the world, at car shows and Concours d'Elegance, perhaps the largest display of pristine automobiles ever.

Our rides are sophisticated, highly engineered and durable machines. However they do have needs which we must attend to so they can endure safely. We have all considered using different means to keep our cars in top shape. It's not unusual for owners to use a Dealer while the vehicle is under warranty and then use an Independent servicer (Indy) going forward, or become a well rewarded Do It Yourself (DIY) mechanic as the car ages.

### Mercedes-Benz Dealer Service

Since 1998 MB has used the Flex Service System (FSS) . A variable next service due indication is available within the instrument cluster. This is based on the manner in which the car has been driven, time and mileage. Your service manual ( model dependent) will list applicable maintenance jobs. Service which is not strictly mileage dependent is listed separately. Driving distance between each service usually can be expected in the range of 10,000 miles and 13,000 miles. You should receive a notice from your dealer when these service intervals are approached. If you use authorized service, a history may be obtained via any MB dealer.

1997 and older cars which are not supported by FSS require more frequent maintenance.

Maintenance jobs are grouped as minor and extended and generally alternate with FSS service incidents.

A significant amount of functional testing and visual inspection is performed at each service interval. Looking quickly at your service manual will give you an idea of how much is actually involved.

Over two consecutive services the Interior, Drive Train, Suspension, Engine Compartment and Trunk are looked at completely to assess fluid levels, and wear. The service will include topping off or replacing fluids and replacing expendable parts. You will be advised if worn parts must also be attended to. Combining these items with requirements for your State Inspection will complete the annual service needs for your vehicle.

Attention to these details will result in a ride that is safe and continue to feel like a new car for a very long time. Maybe your vehicle will live to be a classic.

### Independent Servicer

In the US there are many excellent Independents servicing the MB brand. They follow MB procedures and are capable of performing required service. Frequently MB master technicians can be found working at these businesses and you can be assured of quality materials and workmanship. The first rate shops may even utilize MB test equipment. This is a good option for many of us, especially if using an MB dealer is not convenient.

However, if you bring your car to just any Indy they will gladly take your car in for service even if they have little or no knowledge of your vehicles needs.

Why? Because we do not usually request much. We simply ask for an oil and filter change for example. Many do not even use the correct fluids or parts. They do the work and many of the cars systems remain unchecked. Our next visit may be because we had a tire fail, the car overheated, or the brakes were noisy. And so forth.

Really now; when was the last time you visited an INDY and gave them your service manual and asked for these items to be done?

*The point to be made here is that when we leave the arms of MB dealer service we become responsible for assuring that the aforementioned functional testing and inspection is accomplished.*

The consequences of omitting all the steps required can lead to large unexpected repair bills down the road.

### DIY

Certainly some of the best examples of our fine automobiles have been maintained by their owners or a combination of two or all three options.

For those of us with a bit of technical acumen and a desire to engage there are a myriad of on-line resources to guide us. Everything from simple service items through replacing engines is covered. Repair manuals are also available at the MB dealerships. The DIY mechanic will also find a large selection of sources for wholesale parts. Start by viewing the Forums at [www.mbca.org](http://www.mbca.org).

Keep dated records of all work including OE part numbers, fluids used and mileage to assure continuity and sustain the value of your car.

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