Repair Quote Red Flags

Most shops are honest. But a $2,000 estimate deserves 10 minutes of questions. Here's what a 25-year Master Tech looks for when reviewing a repair quote.

Red flags on the estimate

- No diagnosis listed - just parts ("replace sensor") with no test results
- "Flush" packages recommended at every visit (brake, power steering, fuel injection) with no reason given
- Labor hours way over book time (ask: "what's the book time for this?")
- Parts priced at 2-3x online retail with no warranty explained
- Pressure to decide today, or "it's not safe to drive" without showing you why
- Several unrelated "while we're in there" items stacked on top

Questions to ask - every time

- What exactly failed, and how did you test it?
- Can I see the old part (or a photo / measurement)?
- Is this needed NOW, soon, or can it wait? (Safety first, then reliability, then nice-to-have)
- OEM, aftermarket or used parts? What's the warranty on parts AND labor?
- Is there a TSB, recall or extended warranty that covers this? (Check the VIN!)

Know these before you pay

- Open recalls are fixed FREE at the dealer - run your VIN first
- Some components (emissions, hybrid batteries) have longer federal warranties - often 8 yr / 80k on major emissions parts
- You can ask for a written estimate and approve work before it starts

Want a pro to look it over? Send your estimate to DETAILGUY317 for a line-by-line 2nd opinion: needed, can wait, or overpriced. Find it under "Pro 2nd opinions" on the site.

This guide is general information. Warranty terms vary by manufacturer - check your warranty booklet.