

FREE CHECKLIST

Auto Repair Shop Launch Checklist

From name idea to first customer

A practical 2026 launch worksheet for independent repair shops, mobile mechanics, tire shops, diesel garages, and body shops.

Use this checklist after choosing your shop name.

Validate the name, register the business, prepare services and pricing, set up your online presence, organize operations, and launch with a clear customer acquisition plan.

Print it, share it with your partner or team, and check off each item before opening day.

1 Name & brand	2 Business setup	3 Online presence
4 Shop operations	5 Launch marketing	6 First customer

Created by autoGMS - software to manage bookings, bays, job cards, invoices, customers, and follow-ups.

How to use this checklist

This document is designed for readers who already have a few mechanic shop name ideas and want a practical next step. Work through the sections in order, or jump to the section that matches your current launch stage.

Recommended workflow ☐ Shortlist 3-5 shop names ☐ Validate the winning name ☐ Confirm local business requirements ☐ Prepare services, pricing, and first offer ☐ Set up online visibility ☐ Organize bookings, estimates, invoices, and follow-up	What to complete before opening day ☐ Business registered ☐ Domain and social handles secured ☐ Google Business Profile ready ☐ Phone, booking, and estimate flow tested ☐ Service menu and labor rate set ☐ First launch campaign scheduled
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Important note

This checklist is a planning tool, not legal, tax, insurance, or financial advice. Requirements vary by country, state, city, and shop type. Always confirm licenses, permits, taxes, insurance, and employment rules with the relevant local authority or a qualified professional.

Your launch details

Planned shop name	
Shop type	General repair / mobile mechanic / tire shop / body shop / diesel / other
City or service area	
Target opening date	
Main contact person	

SECTION 1

Choose and validate your shop name

A strong name should be easy to remember, easy to say, easy to search, and safe to use. Before you print signs or buy uniforms, validate the name across local search, domains, social media, and business registration rules.

Name validation checklist

Done	Task	Notes
☐	Create a shortlist of 3-5 possible shop names.	
☐	Check whether each name clearly communicates auto repair, mobile repair, tire service, body work, diesel service, or your specialty.	
☐	Search Google Maps for similar shop names in your city or service area.	
☐	Check whether the name is easy to spell after hearing it once.	
☐	Check whether the name fits signage, uniforms, receipts, and vehicle wraps.	
☐	Search for domain availability, ideally a short .com or local domain.	
☐	Check availability of matching social handles on the platforms you plan to use.	
☐	Check business name and trademark availability using the relevant official databases for your location.	
☐	Ask 10-20 potential customers which name feels most trustworthy.	
☐	Pick one primary name and one backup name before registration.	

Name scoring worksheet

Name idea	Clear?	Memorable?	Domain?	Social?	Score /10

Tip for local SEO

For many repair businesses, a clear name beats a clever name. A name that includes your service, city, or specialty can help customers understand what you do faster. Avoid keyword stuffing; keep the brand natural and trustworthy.

SECTION 2

Register the business and protect the basics

Once the name is selected, set up the business properly so you can open accounts, apply for permits, take payments, hire staff, and sign supplier agreements.

Business setup checklist

Done	Task	Notes
☐	Choose the business structure that fits your location and growth plan.	
☐	Register the business name with the correct local, state, or national authority.	
☐	Apply for tax identification numbers or business tax registrations required in your area.	
☐	Open a business bank account separate from personal finances.	
☐	Set up bookkeeping categories for labor, parts, tools, rent, insurance, marketing, and software.	
☐	Confirm required repair shop licenses, trade permits, zoning permissions, and environmental rules.	
☐	Confirm requirements for mobile repair if you will work at customer locations.	
☐	Get insurance quotes for general liability, garagekeepers, workers compensation, vehicles, tools, and property.	
☐	Prepare basic customer terms: estimates, approvals, storage fees, warranties, returns, and payment deadlines.	
☐	Create a secure folder for business registration, permits, insurance certificates, leases, and supplier agreements.	

Permit and compliance tracker

Requirement	Who to contact	Status	Deadline	Notes

SECTION 3

Define your services, pricing, and policies

Before you advertise, decide what you will sell, how you will price work, what you will not do, and how customers will approve repairs.

Service and pricing checklist

Done	Task	Notes
☐	List your core services, such as diagnostics, oil changes, brakes, suspension, tires, AC, electrical, inspections, body work, or diesel repair.	
☐	Choose your initial service focus instead of trying to offer every repair from day one.	
☐	Set a standard labor rate and document when it changes by job type or technician skill level.	
☐	Set diagnostic fees, inspection fees, shop supply charges, disposal fees, and mobile call-out fees if applicable.	
☐	Create a simple parts markup policy and decide how to handle customer-supplied parts.	
☐	Create a written warranty policy for labor and parts.	
☐	Define estimate approval rules: verbal approval, text approval, signature, deposit, and change order thresholds.	
☐	Build a starter price list for your most common jobs.	
☐	Prepare estimate, invoice, and payment receipt templates.	
☐	Decide which payment methods you will accept before launch.	

Starter service menu

Service	Starting price	Labor time	Parts needed	Notes

SECTION 4

Prepare your shop, tools, vendors, and workflow

Whether you are opening a physical garage or starting as a mobile mechanic, your launch will be smoother if the workspace, tools, suppliers, and repair process are ready before the first customer arrives.

Physical shop setup	Mobile mechanic setup
☐ Confirm lease or workspace agreement ☐ Plan bay layout and customer waiting area ☐ Install signage and safety notices ☐ Prepare lifts, air compressor, lighting, and storage ☐ Set up waste oil, tires, batteries, and hazardous material handling ☐ Create keys, parking, and vehicle movement rules	☐ Prepare service vehicle and tool storage ☐ Define service radius and travel fees ☐ Carry common parts and fluids safely ☐ Create roadside safety rules ☐ Prepare mobile payment and invoice flow ☐ Plan backup workspace for complex jobs

Tools, suppliers, and safety checklist

Done	Task	Notes
☐	Create a master tool and equipment list by service type.	
☐	Confirm diagnostic scanner, battery tester, tire equipment, lifts, specialty tools, or body shop equipment needed for your service menu.	
☐	Choose at least two parts suppliers and document account terms, cut-off times, delivery options, and return policies.	
☐	Create an inventory list for high-turnover parts, fluids, shop supplies, and consumables.	
☐	Prepare safety procedures, PPE, fire extinguishers, spill kits, and first aid supplies.	
☐	Set up customer parking, vehicle drop-off, key drop, and after-hours pickup procedures.	
☐	Create a daily opening and closing checklist for the team.	

SECTION 5

Build your online presence and local visibility

Most customers will check your shop online before calling. Make sure they can find your name, understand your services, trust your reviews, and book or contact you easily.

Online presence checklist

Done	Task	Notes
☐	Buy the domain for your chosen shop name.	
☐	Create a simple website with services, phone number, address or service area, opening hours, booking/contact form, and trust signals.	
☐	Claim and complete your Google	

Done	Task	Notes
	Business Profile.	
[]	Add your correct business category, services, photos, logo, hours, phone number, website, and opening date.	
[]	Create service pages for high-intent searches such as brake repair, oil change, AC repair, tire service, inspection, diagnostics, or mobile mechanic.	
[]	Create local pages for each city or service area only if you can make each page useful and specific.	
[]	Set up review request messages for customers after completed work.	
[]	Create social media profiles with consistent name, logo, bio, phone number, and website.	
[]	Prepare 10 launch posts: behind the scenes, founder story, services, opening offer, FAQs, photos, and customer education.	
[]	Add tracking for calls, forms, bookings, and quote requests.	

Digital asset tracker

Asset	URL / handle	Owner	Status	Next action

SECTION 6

Organize daily operations before the first booking

A shop can lose money even with plenty of demand if jobs, bays, technicians, parts, approvals, and invoices are not organized. Build the workflow before opening day.

Operations checklist

Done	Task	Notes
[]	Define how customers book: phone, website form, WhatsApp, walk-in, Google Business Profile, or online booking.	

Done	Task	Notes
☐	Create a customer intake form for name, phone, vehicle, mileage, concern, preferred time, and approval method.	
☐	Create a vehicle record process for VIN, plate, make, model, year, service history, and photos.	
☐	Create a standard inspection and estimate process.	
☐	Decide who approves estimates and how approvals are recorded.	
☐	Create job cards with technician, bay, due date, labor, parts, notes, photos, and status.	
☐	Create customer update templates for diagnosis, estimate ready, parts ordered, work in progress, completed, and pickup.	
☐	Prepare invoice and payment collection process.	
☐	Set up follow-up reminders for reviews, maintenance, no-shows, and recommended repairs.	
☐	Choose a system to manage bookings, bays, technicians, job cards, invoices, customer records, and reporting in one place.	

Shop workflow map

Workflow step	Tool/system used	Owner	Backup plan

Where autoGMS fits

autoGMS helps repair shops replace scattered spreadsheets and chat threads with one place for bookings, bays, job cards, technicians, customers, invoices, and follow-up. A clear system helps you look professional from the first customer interaction.

SECTION 7

Plan your launch marketing

The goal of launch marketing is not just awareness. It is to generate calls, bookings, quote requests, reviews, and repeat customers from the first week.

Launch marketing checklist

Done	Task	Notes
[]	Choose a simple launch offer, such as a brake inspection, AC check, oil change bundle, tire rotation, diagnostic discount, or fleet inspection.	
[]	Set clear rules for the offer: dates, eligible vehicles, booking method, exclusions, and maximum redemptions.	
[]	Prepare flyers, business cards, shop signage, social posts, and a launch email or SMS if you have a list.	
[]	Contact nearby businesses that can refer customers, such as tire shops, car washes, body shops, parts stores, delivery fleets, and used car dealers.	
[]	Create a referral offer for early customers.	
[]	Plan a small local ad test with one clear message and one clear action.	
[]	Prepare a review request process for every completed job.	
[]	Track where every lead came from: Google, referral, social, flyer, ads, walk-in, or partner.	
[]	Review results weekly and stop marketing activities that do not produce calls, bookings, or quotes.	
[]	Schedule follow-ups for customers who received estimates but did not approve the work.	

Launch campaign planner

Campaign	Audience	Offer	Channel	Budget	Result

SECTION 8

Design the first customer experience

Your first customers will shape your reputation. A consistent process helps you earn trust, reviews, repeat visits, and referrals.

Before the visit	During and after the visit
☐ Confirm appointment and vehicle details ☐ Explain diagnostic fee or inspection process ☐ Send address, parking, or mobile arrival instructions ☐ Prepare intake form and photo process ☐ Confirm approval method and contact number	☐ Inspect and document concerns ☐ Send estimate before starting paid work ☐ Update customer during delays ☐ Review invoice and warranty before handover ☐ Ask for review after successful pickup

Customer communication templates to prepare

Done	Task	Notes
☐	Write a phone script for new calls.	
☐	Write a check-in script for drop-off or mobile arrival.	
☐	Create a diagnosis update template.	
☐	Create an estimate approval template.	
☐	Create a completed-job pickup message.	
☐	Create a review request message.	
☐	Create a declined-estimate follow-up message.	
☐	Create a maintenance reminder message.	

SECTION 9

Your first 30 days after launch

Use the first month to validate demand, tighten workflow, collect reviews, and improve pricing. Do not wait until everything is perfect; measure, adjust, and keep communicating with customers.

Week	Main goal	Actions	Success measure
1	Get visible	Publish website, complete Google Business Profile, announce opening, contact local partners, test phone and booking flow.	Calls and bookings started
2	Earn trust	Deliver excellent first jobs, take photos, request reviews, follow up declined estimates, adjust customer scripts.	First reviews collected
3	Improve operations	Review job times, bay usage, parts delays, estimate approval rate, no-shows, and invoice issues.	Workflow bottlenecks found
4	Scale what works	Double down on channels producing real bookings, refine pricing, create maintenance reminders, plan next campaign.	Repeatable lead source identified

Launch KPI tracker

Metric	Target	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Calls					
Bookings					
Completed jobs					
Estimate approval rate					
Average repair order					
Reviews requested					
Reviews received					
Repeat/follow-up bookings					

SECTION 10

Final opening-day readiness check

Use this one-page summary before announcing your launch offer or accepting your first bookings.

Brand and business

- ☐ Shop name selected and validated
- ☐ Domain and social handles secured
- ☐ Business registration in progress or complete
- ☐ Permits, licenses, insurance checked
- ☐ Banking and bookkeeping ready

Sales and marketing

- ☐ Website or landing page live
- ☐ Google Business Profile prepared
- ☐ Launch offer written
- ☐ First posts and flyers ready
- ☐ Lead source tracking ready

Operations

- ☐ Service menu and prices ready
- ☐ Estimate and invoice process ready
- ☐ Parts suppliers set up
- ☐ Tools and safety checklist complete
- ☐ Customer communication templates ready

Customer experience

- ☐ Booking flow tested
- ☐ Intake form ready
- ☐ Approval process clear
- ☐ Review request process ready
- ☐ Follow-up reminders planned

Next step

When the checklist is complete, your next challenge is consistency: keep bookings organized, assign jobs clearly, update customers, collect payments, and follow up. That is where a garage management system can help from day one.

Ready to run your garage from day one?

autoGMS helps repair shops manage bookings, bays, technicians, job cards, invoices, customers, and follow-ups in one platform.

Book a 15-minute walkthrough

See how to organize your launch workflow before customers start calling.

myautogms.com

My next 3 actions

Action	Owner	Due date	Notes

Keep this checklist as a working document. Revisit it after your first 10 jobs and update your pricing, booking flow, supplier process, and follow-up messages based on what actually happened.