

Auto Repair Shop Opening Checklist

Permits, licenses, compliance documents, and setup tasks to review before opening your shop.

Shop name	
City / state	
Shop type	
Target opening date	

Important: Permit and license requirements vary by country, state, city, county, and shop type. Use this checklist as a planning tool, not legal advice. Confirm requirements with your local licensing office, zoning department, environmental authority, fire department, tax advisor, and insurance provider before opening.

1. Business registration and tax setup

Done	Checklist item	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Choose your business structure, such as sole proprietorship, LLC, corporation, or local equivalent.	
☐	Register your business name with the relevant government authority.	
☐	Apply for your federal tax ID, employer ID, VAT number, sales tax ID, or local equivalent.	
☐	Open a dedicated business bank account.	
☐	Check whether your shop name, domain, and social handles are available before final branding.	
☐	Set up basic bookkeeping, accounting categories, and document storage before taking payments.	

2. Core licenses and permits

Done	Checklist item	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Confirm whether your city, county, or state requires a general business license.	
☐	Check whether auto repair, mechanical repair, body repair, tire service, or mobile mechanic work needs a specific license.	
☐	Apply for any trade license required for your shop category.	
☐	Check if you need a resale certificate or seller permit for parts, tires, accessories, or shop supplies.	
☐	Confirm whether signage, storefront, or exterior branding requires a permit.	
☐	Store copies of license approvals, renewal dates, permit numbers, and responsible contacts.	

3. Location, zoning, lease, and property checks

Done	Checklist item	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Confirm the property is zoned for auto repair, tire service, or your intended shop activity.	
☐	Check parking, bay access, customer waiting area, storage, and vehicle drop-off requirements.	

☐	Ask the landlord for written approval to operate an auto repair business at the location.	
☐	Confirm restrictions on noise, operating hours, exterior work, vehicle storage, and hazardous materials.	
☐	Check whether building modifications, lifts, ventilation, drainage, signage, or electrical work need approval.	
☐	Keep a signed lease, landlord approvals, inspection documents, and property compliance notes in one folder.	

4. Environmental, waste, and safety requirements

Done	Checklist item	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Check rules for used oil, coolant, brake fluid, solvents, batteries, tires, filters, and other shop waste.	
☐	Set up approved waste disposal vendors and keep contracts or pickup receipts.	
☐	Confirm whether you need environmental permits, waste generator registration, or disposal manifests.	
☐	Create a spill response plan and keep spill kits in visible locations.	
☐	Prepare safety data sheets for chemicals, cleaners, fluids, and other controlled materials.	
☐	Confirm ventilation, drainage, storage, fire safety, and hazardous material requirements before opening.	

5. Insurance and employment documents

Done	Checklist item	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Review general liability, garage liability, property insurance, tools and equipment coverage, and cyber coverage.	
☐	Check whether workers compensation, employer liability, or staff injury coverage is required.	
☐	Prepare technician employment contracts, payroll setup, tax withholding, and staff onboarding records.	
☐	Set up workplace safety training, technician certifications, and incident reporting procedures.	
☐	Store insurance policies, certificates, renewal dates, and broker contact details in one place.	
☐	Confirm requirements for test drives, customer vehicles, valet movement, and vehicle storage.	

6. Customer-facing documents and shop policies

Done	Checklist item	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Prepare estimate, invoice, repair order, job authorization, and customer approval templates.	
☐	Create written policies for diagnostics, deposits, storage fees, warranties, returns, and declined repairs.	

☐	Prepare consent language for inspections, photos, test drives, parts ordering, and customer communication.	
☐	Set up a process to store customer details, vehicle records, estimates, job cards, invoices, and approvals.	
☐	Create a process for collecting reviews, sending reminders, and following up after completed work.	
☐	Make sure required notices, prices, licenses, or consumer rights information are displayed if needed.	

7. Software and operations setup

Done	Checklist item	Notes / owner / due date
☐	Set up bookings, calendar availability, bay schedule, technician schedule, and customer communication.	
☐	Create job card templates for the services you plan to offer.	
☐	Add service categories, labor rates, parts, tire inventory, suppliers, and common repair items.	
☐	Prepare estimate, invoice, payment, and follow-up workflows before your first customer arrives.	
☐	Create document folders for permits, licenses, insurance, inspection records, and renewal reminders.	
☐	Use AutoGMS to manage bookings, job cards, estimates, invoices, inventory, customers, and follow-ups in one place.	

8. Opening readiness check

Done	Checklist item	Notes / owner / due date
☐	All required permits, licenses, registrations, and tax documents are approved or confirmed.	
☐	Insurance policies are active and certificates are stored.	
☐	Waste disposal, environmental, fire, and safety processes are documented.	
☐	Equipment is installed, tested, and safe to use.	
☐	Staff know the booking, job card, estimate, invoice, and customer handover process.	
☐	Your opening offer, Google Business Profile, website, phone number, and local listings are ready.	

Next step: organize your shop operations before opening

AutoGMS helps auto repair shops manage bookings, job cards, estimates, invoices, inventory, customers, and follow-ups in one place.

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