# The Benefits of Using Original Equipment Quality Parts

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**All aftermarket auto parts are not created equal.** With the costs of new vehicles continuing to rise, folks are preferring to keep their cars and trucks longer. The good news is that the quality of all vehicles has continued to improve over the years as manufacturing techniques and materials have improved, so well-maintained vehicles routinely last much longer than those manufactured 20 or 30 years ago. However, parts do wear out over time, and it's important to select quality aftermarket parts when making repairs or performing preventative maintenance. Replacement parts need to be engineered and manufactured to the highest standards to perform as the vehicle manufacturer intended. But what you may not know is that there are companies producing economy parts that look exactly like the original equipment (OE) parts at much lower prices, and lower quality… The old adage 'you get what you pay for' certainly applies here. So how do you know if a part is a quality piece at a bargain price, or a liability? One way is to look at the warrantee provided, ensure it covers parts and labor if it fails, another is to talk to an experienced auto technician or counterperson as they know which brands to steer clear of.

But let's go back and look at the factors that can contribute to differences in the quality and reliability of a premium, OE-quality part when compared to an economy part. One factor often not considered is the quality of the raw materials used in manufacturing as it can vary greatly. Let's focus at the materials used to manufacture what seems to be a simple part – an automotive bearing, and why only OE-quality units should be considered.

First and foremost, the quality and cleanliness of the steel used has a substantial impact on the reliability of the end product. In the case of a wheel hub assembly, this also includes the strength of the wheel studs. Bearings manufactured with lower-quality steel will not stand up to the same amount of use and abuse as bearings made with high-quality, clean steel. Economy bearing manufacturers also may opt to cut corners on the seal material, using lower quality rubber instead of nitrile, to lower costs. Lower quality seal materials can lead to failure of the seal, contaminating the bearing and leading to premature failure. The use of lower quality materials also extends



to lubrication. Economy bearings often use a lower-grade of lubrication. This leads to increased operating temperatures, which reduces the longevity of other bearing components, impacting the reliability of the bearing. With many modern bearings being permanently sealed and non-serviceable, you want to ensure the lubrication is going to last the life of the bearing.

In addition to the components mentioned above, many new wheel hub assemblies include wheel speed sensors. Wheel speed sensors are critical components for braking, traction and stability control systems, and are increasingly used for advanced driver-assistance systems. Economy wheel hub assemblies often use lower quality sensors and cable materials and connectors. Low-grade connectors can allow water and debris to enter the connector housing, and the connector ends are not always soldered, instead relying solely on less reliable, crimped connectors.

So clearly bargain bearings, and other low-cost parts may not be such a deal in the long term if they fail and require replacement outside of their warrantee. Does this mean that all aftermarket parts that are not purchased from the dealer are poor quality? Not at all! Many companies produce parts that exceed OE specifications and cost less, and often weaknesses have been reverse engineered out of the component. Other OEM factories produce parts that are put in boxes destined for the dealership and in other boxes for aftermarket sales – the same parts, but one has a cheaper price. The secret is knowing which parts will last, and which are knock-offs designed to sell on price alone. When having a repair performed, don't be afraid to ask your shop if they are using premium, OE-quality parts and find out what the warrantee is on those parts. If you plan to keep your vehicle for some time, and if that part has a 12-months or 12 thousand miles (whichever comes first) warrantee, you may want to see if a better part with a better warrantee is available. All of our repairs come with a 2-year, 24 thousand-mile (whichever comes last) warrantee, so we will only use the highest quality parts – but if we can save you money by using a quality aftermarket part we certainly will! ■