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FEATURE

## **Getting the Best Out of Spare Parts**

Maintaining a vehicle's performance and longevity is a top priority for every owner. One crucial aspect of achieving this goal is procuring and using the right spare parts. Whether you own a car, motorcycle, or any other type of vehicle, having access to high-quality and compatible spare parts is essential. Vehicle spare parts are components that are designed to replace worn-out or damaged parts in a vehicle. They play a vital role in preserving the vehicle's functionality, safety, and overall performance. By using genuine or reliable aftermarket spare parts, owners can ensure the smooth operation of their vehicles, reduce the risk of breakdowns, and extend the lifespan of their investments.

In this article, we will delve into the intricacies of purchasing spare parts for vehicles, exploring key factors to consider, reliable sources, and expert advice to ensure a smooth and satisfying experience.

Complaints in relation to the sale of vehicle spare parts, whether new or secondhand, are not uncommon at the Council especially with the emergence of a number of online dealers who retail such products on social media. Common complaints include non-delivery of items, spare parts not functioning as expected, parts stop functioning after the warranty period, and dealers refusing to provide redress.

### **Let's have a look at some of these complaints:**

#### **Case study 1**

A consumer purchased an ABS pump worth \$1000, which later malfunctioned. He was denied a refund by the dealer on the basis that he had installed it in his car, and the pump was in use when it failed.



## Case Study 2

A consumer purchased a gearbox costing \$900, which he later discovered was faulty. Since the dealer did not have a replacement, he was left with no option but to seek a refund. To add to his woes, he was charged a 25% administrative fee, which was to be deducted from his refund.

Given the number and different types of complaints being raised at the Council relating to spare parts, it is crucial to understand the art of purchasing spare parts.

### **Here are some important tips to consider when buying spare parts:**

#### **Identifying Your Needs:**

Before embarking on the journey of purchasing spare parts, it is crucial to accurately identify your needs. Determine the specific part or component required for your vehicle, considering its make, model, year of manufacture, and any additional specifications. By having this information at hand, you will save time and avoid the pitfalls of acquiring the wrong parts.

#### **OEM vs. Aftermarket Parts:**

One of the fundamental choices you will encounter is deciding between Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) parts and aftermarket parts. OEM parts are produced by the same manufacturer that supplied the original parts for your vehicle, ensuring compatibility and quality. On the other hand, aftermarket parts are manufactured by third-party companies and may offer cost savings but could vary in terms of quality and fit. Evaluating your budget, vehicle's warranty, and personal preferences will help you make an informed decision.

#### **Researching Reliable Suppliers:**

Finding a reputable supplier is vital to ensure the purchase of genuine spare parts. Conduct thorough research to identify authorized dealerships, certified online platforms, or specialized automotive stores with a proven track record of supplying authentic components. Reading customer reviews, checking for certifications, and seeking recommendations from experienced vehicle owners or mechanics can guide you toward trustworthy suppliers.



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### **Price Comparison and Quality Assurance:**

While cost is an important factor, it should not be the sole determinant in purchasing spare parts. It is essential to compare prices from different suppliers to ensure you are getting a fair deal. However, be cautious of suspiciously low prices, as they could be indicative of counterfeit or poor-quality parts. Consider the reputation and expertise of the supplier, warranty coverage, and any additional services they may offer, such as technical support or return policies.

### **Genuine vs. Counterfeit Parts:**

The global market for counterfeit automotive parts continues to grow, posing a significant risk to vehicle owners. Counterfeit parts not only compromise performance and safety but can also invalidate your vehicle's warranty. Pay close attention to packaging, branding, and overall quality when inspecting the parts. Look for markings, serial numbers, and holograms that authenticate their genuineness. When in doubt, consult a trusted mechanic or contact the original manufacturer for verification.

### **Online Shopping Considerations:**

Online platforms offer convenience and a vast selection of spare parts, but they also come with potential risks. When shopping online, ensure the website is secure and reputable, with encrypted payment gateways. Read product descriptions thoroughly, including compatibility details, specifications, and customer reviews. Double-check the seller's return and refund policies, and be cautious of sellers with limited information or suspiciously low prices.

### **Seek Expert Advice:**

When unsure about the appropriate spare part or faced with technical complexities, do not hesitate to seek expert advice. Consult a certified mechanic, automotive forums, or online communities dedicated to vehicle enthusiasts. Their expertise and experiences can provide valuable insights, helping you make well-informed decisions.

### **Regular Maintenance and Preventive Measures:**

Investing in spare parts is not only about addressing immediate repair needs but also about preventive maintenance. Regularly maintaining your vehicle and replacing worn-out parts before they fail can help prevent costly repairs and ensure the longevity of your vehicle. Follow the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule and seek professional assistance when necessary.

Furthermore, consumers are advised to be vigilant when purchasing secondhand spare parts by transacting with traders which offer warranties or have redress options available in cases where



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the product becomes faulty. Consumers must also learn to spot such unethical dealers by doing thorough research and obtain reviews from family, friends and also, if possible, from past customers.

Consumers who have faced similar issues are encouraged to contact the Council on the toll-free number 155. Alternatively, consumers can lodge complaints using the Consumer Council of Fiji mobile app or via the Council's website [www.consumersfiji.org](http://www.consumersfiji.org)