

# How to start your own vehicle repair shop

## Being self-employed: pros and cons

Choosing to become self-employed can certainly be a **gamble**, due to the risks that running your own business involves. Getting no regular monthly wages might be a problem if your profits are not enough to cover periods during which you are not able to work. Self-employment, in fact, does not grant any **sick leave** or **paid time off**: this means that if you are ill or want to have a break from work, you will not get any money. Moreover, if you are your own boss, you are **liable** for any financial loss your business might **fall into** and all fees and taxes.

On the other hand, self-employment ensures you much more flexibility as far as working hours are concerned; this means you can set your own schedule and plan the best time to take your time off. However, the biggest advantages are definitely that you can choose who you work with and keep all the profits for yourself.


## First steps to take to start a business

When you have the idea of starting your own business, for instance a vehicle repair shop, you should carefully **weigh up** these aspects and analyse the possible risks of your venture. Registering your business with the government is not the only step to take in order to start working on your own. Before that, you should:

- carefully plan your business, focusing on the **start-up** and **ongoing** costs you will have to cover, for example, registration and **licence fees**; **insurance**; equipment; any **shop-rental fees** and labour costs;
- think of the kind of customers you want to attract: people usually need a mechanic only when they have a problem with their car, but the best customers could be those who ensure a steady income with a **vehicle service contract**. This is similar to the **warranty** given by car dealers to customers who buy a new vehicle, to cover possible repairs for a definite period of time (usually 36 months). A service contract certainly implies extra costs for a car owner, but it offers service any time a component fails once their warranty has expired;
- carefully decide how much your clients will be charged for your services: your fees may vary according to the location of your shop, to the kind of vehicle requiring your services and to the **labour costs** of your staff;
- do not forget the importance of advertising your business: distributing **flyers** or creating a social media profile are only some means by which customers can get in touch with you and your business.

Adapted from: <https://debitoor.com/blog/pros-and-cons-of-being-self-employed>  
<https://howtostartanllc.com/business-ideas/car-repair-shop>

**to fall into:** *incappare, incorrere*  
**gamble:** *azzardo*  
**landlord:** *locatore, proprietario di immobile*  
**liable:** *responsabile*  
**mileage:** *miglia totali, chilometraggio*  
**ongoing:** *correnti, in itinere*  
**paid time off:** *permesso/congedo retribuito*  
**sick leave:** *congedo per malattia*  
**start-up:** *attivazione*  
**venture:** *impresa*  
**to weigh up:** *valutare, soppesare*

**1**  Match these explanations with the words in bold in the text on the previous page.

1. A paid plan that helps cover the costs of any repairs needed: .....
2. An amount of money people have to pay in order to use something or do some kind of activity: .....  
.....
3. A kind of insurance people are granted when they buy a new car, and which covers some mechanical breakdowns, but only lasts for a limited period or mileage: .....
4. A piece of paper containing an advertisement, which is usually handed out to people walking by or posted: .....
5. All the expenses covering the salaries or wages of your staff: .....
6. Sum of money you have to pay to a landlord in order to use his premises for your business: .....
7. A means of protection for goods, people or activities against possible losses, damages or even illnesses: .....

**2**  Fill in the gaps with the proper word, choosing from those used in the previous activity.

1. Due to the high ..... in the city centre, the mechanic I used to go to has moved to the **edge of town**.
2. You'd better **take out** an ..... policy to protect your business from any risks, such as fire or theft.
3. The ..... of my new car does not cover faults resulting from improper use or maintenance.
4. I wish I could open my own car repair shop, but I fear I can't afford the cost of a .....: it's a shame that the Government keeps them so high!
5. My letter box is full of .....: I'm really **fed up with** all these adverts!
6. A friend of mine runs a taxi company: each of his cars has a ....., so he doesn't have to worry about any breakdown or damage.
7. I'll try to avoid hiring other staff: the ..... are getting too high.

**to be fed up with:** *essere stufo di*  
**edge of town:** *fuori città, periferia*  
**to take out:** *sottoscrivere, stipulare*

**3**  Read the text and say if the statements below are true or false. Correct the false statements.

**Interviewer:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to our podcast “Highway to success”. Here with us is a skilled technician who hit the mark and made his own fortune. Let’s find out how Mark Scattle became his own boss!

**Mark Scattle:** Good evening, everyone!

**I:** Well, Mark, I know that you first started working as a car mechanic for an important car dealer’s shop. Why did you decide to quit?

**M:** I have always worked hard trying to learn all about the newest techniques and equipment that could help me carry out repair work as well as I could. As time went by, I just felt the need to become more independent and to work without anyone telling me what to do and how to do it.

**I:** So, a greater autonomy: was that the only thing you were searching for?

**M:** Undoubtedly that was the mainspring that drove me to start my own business, together with the hope of earning more and keeping all the income for myself! It has certainly been the biggest challenge of my life so far.

**I:** Was it difficult to get started?

**M:** Yes indeed! I had to plan everything carefully. Luckily, I had the possibility to use the premises where my mother used to have her hairdresser’s shop, so I could limit start-up expenses. I had earned enough money as an employee, so I could rely on a sum that allowed me not to worry about the licence and insurance fees. And I was lucky enough to buy the equipment I needed at a special price from a colleague of mine who had retired. What I had to pay careful attention to was the staff I had to hire: I certainly needed someone to help me but I wanted to be sure that I could afford all the ongoing costs of my business.

**I:** How many people work with you?

**M:** After a couple of years I managed to hire four workers. It was quite a success for me. If only I think how worried I was to get my name out! You can’t imagine how many flyers I handed out! Now I have a number of customers who have signed a vehicle service contract, so I can count on a steady income to improve my equipment and pay my employees’ salaries.

**I:** So, you made it! Thank you for sharing your experience with us, Mark, and good luck with your business.

1. Mark Scattle has always been self-employed
2. He decided to open a car repair shop because he didn’t want to work with other people.
3. He believed he could enjoy greater autonomy if he had his own business.
4. He didn’t have to pay any start-up costs.
5. He didn’t have to pay an expensive rent for his garage premises.
6. His workshop became popular thanks to social networks.
7. Mark is a bit worried because he does not have a fixed income.

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**4**  **PAIR WORK** Take turns with a partner to describe the pictures below. You may find these words useful.

flat tire • jack stand • torch • wrench • bonnet • coolant • oil level • nuts • belt

