

2002 Toyota Camry repairs

Written by Administrator

Saturday, 16 July 2011 16:16 - Last Updated Tuesday, 26 July 2011 19:33

I bought my 2002 Toyota Camry in September 2003, with 30,000 miles on it. It's actually been a fantastic car for past 8 years. But as time goes on, it shows its age. This summer I decided to pay attention to it when there was a problem I couldn't ignore. There was a loud noise coming from under the engine when the car was running... definitely had that rumbling exhaust leak sound. I took it to a local garage and they quoted \$750 to replace the flex pipe/catalytic converter. The part itself was \$550. I looked online and found the pipe on Amazon.com for \$180. I thought, hey what a savings if I do it myself! After all I worked in a garage for the summer of 1997.

Well, low and behold I was not able to replace the pipe myself. I had gotten all the special tools to do it, but those exhaust manifold bolts would not budge. Oil, impact wrench, etc. Nothing. So I gave up and brought it to Midas, where they replaced it, using the part I bought, for \$65. I wasn't able to replace the pipe myself, but I did end up saving a lot of money. $\$750 - (\$180 + \text{tools} + \$65) = \sim \450 savings.

Well, my car had a few other problems, mainly suspension and steering related. After failing to fix the exhaust pipe myself, I was determined to fix something on my car...

Problem 1) Rumbling from the back of the car while driving over bumps

After reading posts on the internet I started to assume that the struts were responsible. It seemed logical: clunking over bumps = struts. Turns out it wasn't entirely the case in the rear. A \$9 pair of rear stabilizer bar bushings fixed that noise. Those weren't too difficult to replace, except that the stabilizer bar is under tension. When you remove the bolts holding the stabilizer

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bar bushings or links, the bar will move and you will need to push the bar back into place the replace the bolts. It can actually take a lot of force, using a clamp or leverage, to get the link bolts back into place. **Fix: rear stabilizer bar (sway-bar) bushings**

Problem 2) Squeaky steering wheel

After a few years, it started sounding like mice were in my steering wheel whenever I'd turn it at low speeds. This was the easiest fix possible in my car. I found the solution here: <http://www.instructables.com/id/How-to-fix-a-2002-Toyota-Camry-squeaking-steering-/step2/Spray-WD-40-Here/>

It is really deceptive, because from where you sit at the steering wheel it sounds like the noise is coming from the wheel itself, not the connection on the floor.

Fix: WD-40 or oil the connection between the steering column and universal joint in the floor

Problem 3) Oxidized paint

This wasn't really a mechanical problem, but it was unsightly. My car has Toyota "Super white" paint, which means its as white as possible and gets dirty incredibly fast. Add to that a problem with no clear coat and I had some significant oxidation over the years. It got to the point where I could run my finger over it in the rain and get a white finger tip from the paint coming off. What fixed this? Washing it with Amorall car-wash and waxing it with TR-3 glaze. It was a lot of work, but it worked! **Fix: Wash car (with car-wash soap) and apply glaze (TR-3)**

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Problem 4) Front brakes, with rusted on rotors

At 102,000 miles, a tech at Midas recommended new front brakes (rotors and pads). The front brakes had *never* been changes on my car before. I attempted this job and was successful. It turns out that front disc brake replacement is actually pretty straightforward. The only challenge I had was rotors that were rusted onto the wheel hub. After banging for a few minutes I realized it wasn't going anywhere no matter how much I hit it, and I had to find a better way. A search on the internet showed this amazingly simple technique:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtsTJCRIjAs>

. Simply put a bolt in the caliper mounting holes with a nut on the other side. Hold the nut steady with a wrench and tighten the bolt until the rotor pops off. It will actually pop off with a loud bang. No cutting, hitting, or heat, just leverage.

Fix: Watch the youtube video linked to in this paragraph

which does an excellent job visualizing the process.

Problem 5) Very loud grumbling noise in right-rear tire at highway speeds

During a snow storm 2 winters ago, I slid sideways into a granite curb and damaged the steel wheel enough that I needed to have it replaced. It turns out I also damaged the wheel bearing during that collision with the curb. For nearly two years I rode around with a rather loud noise at any speed above 40mph, but was much worse above 65mph. I looked into it and determined the wheel bearing was bad. Upon reading about it, it seemed like a very easy part to replace. The wheel bearing came pre-assembled as part of the wheel hub, and only 4 bolts held it on. No need to remove the brakes to replace it either. I attempted this easy job, but it turned out to be impossible for me. The hub was rusted onto the knuckle and would not come loose. I hit it with a rubber mallet, then a hammer, then a sledge hammer. I tried penetrating oil. I took off the brakes and hammered a chisel between the hub and backing plate. I even tried expanding a bolt/nut between the hub and backing plate. Lastly I tried putting the tire back on the car and lowering the car onto the hub assembly... that didn't work either. What finally worked?? Bringing it to Midas, where they used a torch and a sliding hammer to get the thing off. This was unfortunate because the Napa part was only \$95, but the Midas part was \$225. However, I needed to have the wheel bearing replaced, and they were able to do it. **Fix: bring it to Midas.**