

Parts is Parts
By Steven Schlossman

I like to use genuine BMW parts on my car. That doesn't have to mean, Bring My Wallet every time I belly up to my favorite parts counter. I enjoy performing some basic maintenance on the car myself. Partly for the cost savings and, more importantly, for the time I save. It's just not convenient to take the morning off every time you need the oil changed. And if you go to the track more than a few times a year, you need to know how to replace brake pads and rotors anyway. We all know that our BMW dealers give us a Car Club discount. Those can range anywhere from 10 to 20%. The savings are appreciated; they cover the membership fee in no time.

Our Car Club discount entitles us to a percentage off "list price." What is "list price?" I wanted to know. I decided, once and for all, to do a comparison. Over a couple of days I took a survey. It was completely unbiased. No dealership knew who I was and I called each of the local BMW dealers for their over-the-counter, retail list prices on a few select items (all Original Equipment BMW parts because sometimes you get parts from Original Equipment Manufacturers that are not always OE). Because of this, wholesale and mail order prices are not included in this survey. Just as BMW dealerships are independent business owners who are free to charge whatever the market will bear, we as consumers have the right to shop around for the best prices.

I called each dealership between August 29 and September 6, 2003. I have to say, every dealership was polite and helpful on the phone. (It did take, however, four times to get through to BMW of Fairfax.) To conduct my survey, I researched the parts for a 1998 328i. (Please note that these prices are subject to change.)

After surveying everyone it was clear to see what BMW's MSRP was. Russel, Tischer, Northwest and Towson all quoted the same price for each part. Using those quotes it was easy to do some calculations. Something to also consider, a few dealerships will ship parts to you. So as they say, let's do the numbers.

Part Number	Description	Price range
11-42-7-512-300	Oil filter	\$6.80-\$11.56
13-72-1-730-946	Air filter	\$12.00-\$19.76
61-21-8-381-724	Battery	\$96.43-\$125.52
34-11-1-164-431	Brake disc	\$52.60-\$72.78

Rank	Oil Filter	List	Markup	Discount	CCA Price
1	Russel	8.50	0%	20%	6.80
1	Tischer	8.50	0%	20%	6.80
3	Northwest	8.50	0%	15%	7.23
4	Towson	8.50	0%	10%	7.65
5	Tate	9.35	10%	10%	8.42
6	Arlington	10.63	25%	15%	9.04
7	VOB	10.63	25%	10%	9.57
8	Fairfax	13.60	60%	15%	11.56
9	Sterling	13.18	55%	10%	11.86
10	Passport	14.62	72%	15%	12.43

Rank	Air Filter	List	Markup	Discount	CCA Price
1	Russel	15.00	0%	20%	12.00
1	Tischer	15.00	0%	20%	12.00
3	Northwest	15.00	0%	15%	12.75
4	Towson	15.00	0%	10%	13.50
5	Arlington	16.50	10%	15%	14.03
6	Tate	16.50	10%	10%	14.85
7	VOB	16.88	13%	10%	15.19
8	Passport	17.93	20%	15%	15.24
9	Sterling	20.70	38%	10%	18.63
10	Fairfax	23.25	55%	15%	19.76

Rank	Battery	List	Markup	Discount	CCA Price
1	Russel	120.54	0%	20%	96.43
1	Tischer	120.54	0%	20%	96.43
3	Fairfax	120.54	0%	15%	102.46
3	Northwest	120.54	0%	15%	102.46
5	Tate	120.54	0%	10%	108.49
5	Towson	120.54	0%	10%	108.49
7	VOB	124.99	4%	10%	112.49
8	Sterling	132.59	10%	10%	119.33
9	Arlington	147.67	23%	15%	125.52
9	Passport	147.67	23%	15%	125.52

Rank	Rotor	List	Markup	Discount	CCA Price
1	Russel	65.75	0%	20%	52.60
1	Tischer	65.75	0%	20%	52.60
3	Northwest	65.75	0%	15%	55.89
4	Arlington	68.50	4%	15%	58.23
4	Passport	68.50	4%	15%	58.23
6	Towson	65.75	0%	10%	59.18
7	VOB	71.74	9%	10%	64.57
8	Tate	73.90	12%	10%	66.51
9	Fairfax	83.50	27%	15%	70.98
10	Sterling	80.87	23%	10%	72.78

In the order of Total Best Prices, I came up with the following scorecard.

1	Russell	4	(tied)
1	Tischer	4	(tied)
3	Northwest	12	
4	Towson	19	
5	Arlington	24	(tied)
5	Tate	24	(tied)
7	VOB	28	
8	Fairfax	30	
9	Passport	31	
10	Sterling	35	

