

GET YOUR BEARINGS / GUIDE

Your first Saturday with the car

Before ordering parts or taking anything apart, spend one short session learning what you have. A camera, a notebook, and a place to save the files are enough.

1

First 20 minutes: take the starting photos.

Photograph all four sides, the cabin, engine bay, trunk, and anything that worries you. Include a wide view and a close-up. Record the date. These are your before photos, even if no work happens today.

2

Next 20 minutes: write down what is known.

Put the car details on page 6. Separate what a record says from what you can confirm on the car. If the engine, brakes, or trim are uncertain, write "not confirmed" and name the person or document that could settle it.

3

Next 20 minutes: choose three questions.

What could make the car unsafe? What could change the project budget? What do you need to know before ordering anything? Put these questions on page 7 and arrange qualified help where needed.

4

Last 15 minutes: leave one useful next step.

Choose a task you can finish without opening another large job. "Send six photos to the shop and ask for an inspection appointment" is useful. "Restore the front end" is too large to be next Saturday's task.

You can call this session finished when...

Your photos are saved, the car record has a first draft, and one next action has a date. No parts purchase is required. If the car's safety is uncertain, arrange an assessment before driving it.

KEEP CONTROL OF THE MONEY / WORKED EXAMPLE

A budget you can trust

Money already paid and money already promised are different things. Track both, or the project can look cheaper than it really is.

Teaching example: you allow \$1,200 for one stage and hold another \$250 aside for surprises. You approve \$840 of work and parts. You have paid \$300 of that approved amount. These numbers illustrate the bookkeeping, not actual Mustang repair prices.

The number to keep	Amount	What it means
Stage limit	\$1,200	The most you have allocated to this stage.
Committed	\$840	All approved costs, including the \$300 paid.
Paid so far	\$300	Money that has already left your account.
Still owed	\$540	\$840 committed minus \$300 paid.
Room before the limit	\$360	\$1,200 limit minus \$840 committed.
Separate reserve	\$250	Money held outside this stage budget.

The easy mistake

Spending \$300 does not leave \$900 free to spend. Another \$540 is already promised. You have \$360 left within the stage limit, plus the separate reserve you have chosen to protect.

Include parts, labor, tax, freight, and required supplies in the approved total. When an order changes, update the commitment. A refund only changes the paid figure after the money is returned. Use your own figures on page 9.

KEEP THE PROJECT EASY TO RESTART / REUSABLE WORKING PAGE

Leave yourself a useful next step

Use one page per garage session. A few honest sentences beat a perfect-looking log. See the completed example on page 17.

Date and time spent

The job I worked on

What did I want to finish today?

What did I do, and what did I learn?

Include photo or receipt references so you can find the detail later.

What is still unresolved?

Record anything that needs checking before the work continues.

What is the very next action?

Name the task, the parts or information needed, and where they are.

Money spent or approved today

Next session date