

Symptoms of Bad Struts in Cars

A [car's](#) "struts" is a term often heard but little understood. This may be due to the fact that a strut is not an individual automotive part, but rather an assembly of different suspension components. If struts fail, numerous handling problems become evident.

Function

Struts are made up of the coil spring, shock absorber, strut bearings and the steering knuckle. The strut assembly plays a major role in the handling and driving [comfort](#) of a car.

Longevity

Strut assemblies wear out gradually. Longevity depends on a number of factors. Local driving on smooth road surfaces will prolong the life of shocks and struts, while traveling consistently on winding, gravel or dirt roads will initiate quicker replacement.

Symptoms

Strut symptoms are normally not subtle and easy to identify. It is time to bring your car in for suspension service if any of these symptoms are evident: the [vehicle](#) bottoms out, drifts to the left or right when braking, sways, bounces or you notice excessive tire wear.

Causes

Failure of the assembly usually results from a leaking shock or strut, loose mounting, worn coil spring or damaged piston rod.

Maintenance

Inspection of a vehicle's strut assembly should take place at least annually. If you are having a wheel alignment, the struts will also be checked by the technician.

How to Tell if You Have Bad Shocks or Bad Coil Springs

Step 1

Knowing the functions of springs and shocks in the [car](#) is the first step to diagnosing what might be wrong. Simply put, shocks prevent the vehicle from bouncing up and down. Springs hold the vehicles weight.

Step 2

To see if your shocks are bad, turn your [vehicle](#) off (if it isn't already) and place it in "Park." Place your weight on the bumper, and release. If the vehicle bounces up and down more than one and a half to two times, the shocks need to be replaced. If you are able to visually inspect your shocks from underneath the vehicle, look for oil leaking in the area where the shaft moves - this is another indication that the shocks need to be replaced.

Step 3

A visual inspection is all that is needed for your springs. If the car looks "low", and is frequently bottoming out when it should not be, then it is likely that the springs need to be replaced.