

7 Critical Mistakes to Avoid When Installing Complete Strut Assemblies

Complete strut assemblies streamline suspension repairs by eliminating spring compression and component reuse. But improper installation can negate these benefits, leading to noise complaints, alignment issues, premature wear, and safety concerns.

Below are seven common installation mistakes and how to avoid them.



1. Skipping Pre-Installation Inspection

The mistake: Installing the new strut assembly without inspection, assuming it's perfect out of the box.

Why it matters: Shipping damage, incorrect part numbers, or orientation errors (left vs. right) can cause fitment issues or post-installation noise.

Best practice:

- Verify the part number matches the vehicle exactly
- Confirm left/right orientation
- Inspect mounts, bearings, springs, and studs for damage
- Compare the new assembly to the old one before installation



2. Ignoring Proper Strut Orientation

The mistake: Installing the strut without attention to spring end position, mount alignment, or directional markings.

Why it matters: Many complete struts are indexed for correct orientation. Improper positioning causes spring binding, noise, or uneven ride height.

Best practice:

- Align arrows, notches, or labels on the mount as specified
- Ensure the spring end seats properly in the lower perch
- Double-check mount alignment before tightening



3. Failing to Torque Fasteners to OE Specifications

The mistake: Using an impact gun to tighten mounting bolts without final torque verification.

Why it matters: Over- or under-torqued fasteners lead to clunking noises, loose components, or premature failure of mounts and bushings.

Best practice:

- Always use a torque wrench for final tightening
- Follow OE torque specifications for:
 - Upper mount nuts
 - Knuckle-to-strut bolts
 - Stabilizer link connections



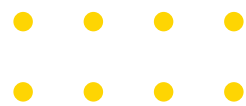
4. Improperly Tightening Upper Mount Nuts

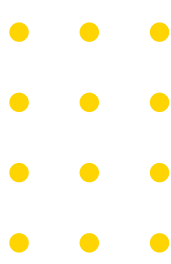
The mistake: Torquing upper mount nuts while the vehicle is still lifted.

Why it matters: This will preload bushings incorrectly, leading to noise, harsh ride quality, and premature mount failure.

Best practice:

- Snug fasteners while the vehicle is lifted
- Torque to OE specifications with the vehicle at ride height (wheels on ground, suspension loaded)





5. Reusing Worn-Related Components

The mistake: Replacing the strut assembly while leaving worn sway bar links, control arm bushings, or ball joints untouched.

Why it matters: New struts often expose existing wear in surrounding suspension components, resulting in comeback noise complaints.

Best practice:

- Inspect stabilizer links, bushings, ball joints, and tie rods during installation
- Replace worn components at the same time to avoid repeat labor
- Communicate findings clearly to the customer



7. Forgetting the Post-Installation Road Test

The mistake: Skipping a test drive after installation.

Why it matters: Minor issues like loose fasteners, misaligned components, or noise under a load may not be obvious in the bay.

Best practice:

- Perform a short road test over varied surfaces
- Listen for clunks, pops, or steering pull
- Recheck torque immediately if anything feels off

Conclusion

Complete strut assemblies save time and improve safety, but only when installed correctly. These seven preventable mistakes account for most comeback complaints. By investing a few extra minutes in proper inspection, torque verification, alignment, and road testing, you'll deliver quality work that protects both your reputation and your customer's safety.

Install it right the first time and the strut assembly will do exactly what it was designed to do.



6. Skipping the Alignment

The mistake: Returning the vehicle to service without performing a wheel alignment.

Why it matters: Strut replacement directly affects camber and caster. Driving without proper alignment causes poor handling and rapid tire wear. Even if the vehicle had a recent alignment, strut replacement requires rechecking specifications.

Best practice:

- Always recommend or perform an alignment after strut replacement
- Document alignment readings before and after service

Quick Reference Checklist

- Part number verified and components inspected
- Orientation confirmed (left/right, indexing marks)
- All fasteners torqued to OEM specifications
- Upper mounts torqued at ride height
- Related suspension components assessed and replaced as needed
- Wheel alignment performed and documented
- Road test completed

