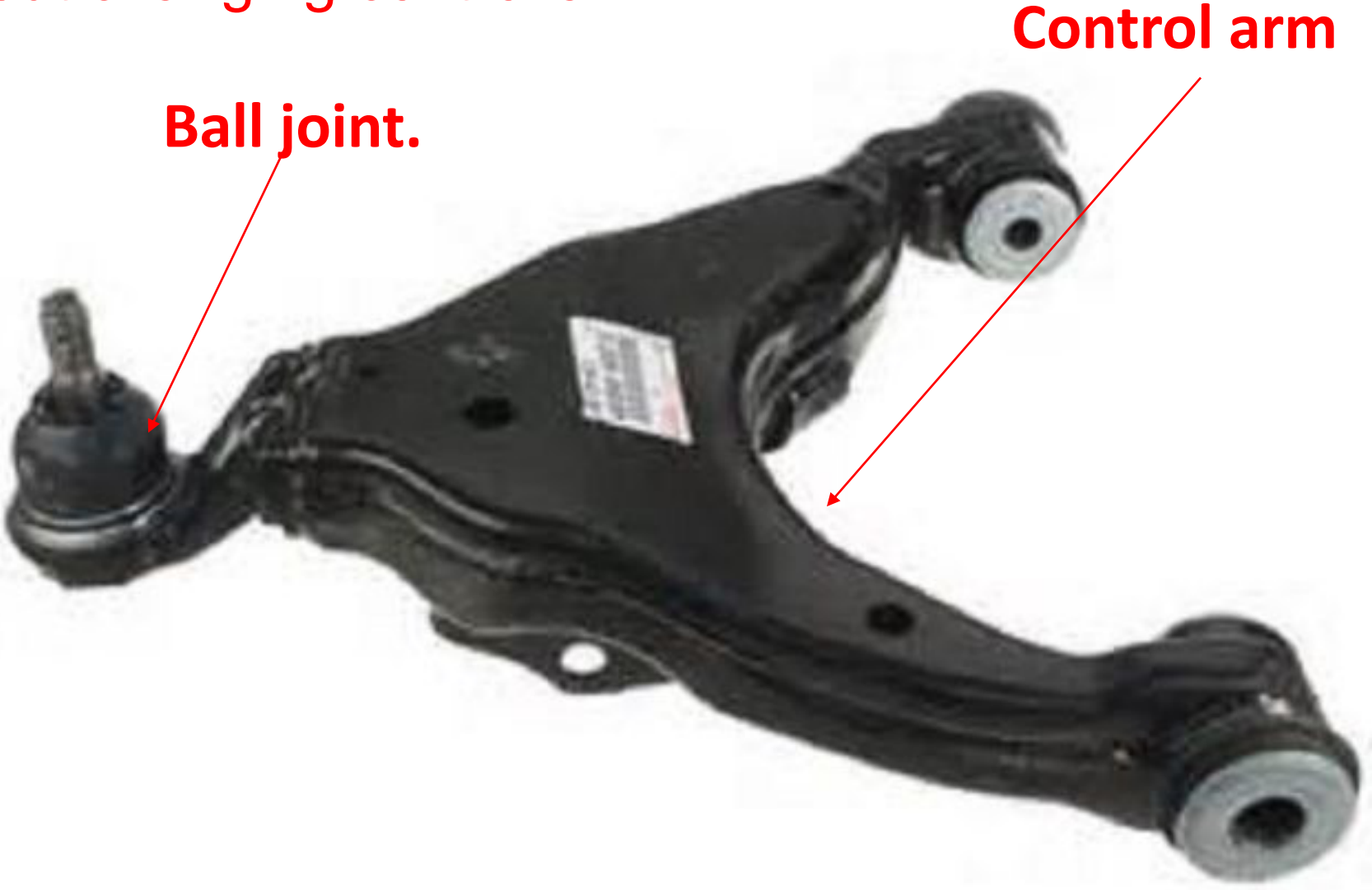


AutoShack Weekly Tip



- If your vehicle has made or makes noises while driving over a bump or a pot hole, then you have probably been told you need a new **ball joint** before.
- In this tip we discuss what ball joints do, typical signs of failure and what to know when you need to replace one.
- Ball joints are part of the suspension system and they help to carry the weight of the vehicle and provide a means of vehicle control.
- Ball joints are like the human shoulder joint in that they have a wide range of motion. They are connected to the steering system, allowing the the tires to turn.
- While most vehicles only use one ball joint (lower ball joint), some vehicles (mostly European vehicles) use both lower and upper on either side.
- Note that not all noises mentioned in first ballet indicate ball joint failure. Other suspension components could be failing.

Photo of ball joint in control arm. Ball joint can be changed without changing control arm



Ball joint.

Control arm

- **How can I tell my ball joint is bad?**

- Rattles and squeaks when going over bumps or pot holes.
- Too much play in your steering wheel. In other words when you turn your steering wheel and it rotates too much before it starts to activate the tires to turn.
- Uneven tire wear.
- Drifting when driving. Drifting is when your vehicle attempts to slowly move to the left or right when you take your hands off the steering wheel.

- **What causes ball joint failure?**

- Bad or severe road conditions is the biggest cause of ball joint failure.
- Every so often, improper installation can lead to premature ball joint failure.
- In recent years, many poor quality car parts (including ball joints) have found their way into the market. These are not made to standards and will always fail prematurely. If you're unsure what brand to get we can help. Please contact us.

• **What do I need to know if I'm told I need a new ball joint?**

- The ball joint is connected to the control arm but it is connected in such a way that the damaged ball joint can be removed and a new one installed.
- Some mechanics, in the interest of saving their time instead of saving you money, will tell you to change the entire control arm.
- While this may be the best course of action if the control arm is also bad, it is not if only the ball joint is bad. At least not for you because it will cost you so much more.
- Occasionally, for safety reasons it is best to change the control arm.
- We have seen cars come in for a ball joint job but the control arms are so badly rusted that changing the ball joint is not enough.
- So the next time your mechanic says you need a new ball joint and puts control arm on your list of needed items, ask for clarification.

- Click the links below to visit/contact us to learn more about us and how we might be able to assist you.
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- A majority of the tip topics are suggested by others based on their experiences.
- Consider helping others to benefit from your experiences by suggesting a topic for our tip bank based on your car troubles, experiences or observations.

CREDITS

✓ Control arm photo: www.ebay.com