

Wheels: *Walter W. writes by e-mail: “I’m working on a 2005 Mazda 6 S (the 6 cylinder). The rear brakes are almost gone and I may just go ahead and do the fronts too. The thing is that when I call car part stores, I get mixed messages. I know you said I should put what came on it, in terms of ceramic, semi-metallic, or organic. One store says the OEM is Semi-metallic front, and organic back. Two dealers have said to me that both front and rear are semi-metallic. Another store says that OEM is ceramic on both. I would love to not have to go to the dealer to get the super expensive pads, unless that’s the best thing in the world to do. The Advanced Auto pads are semi-metallic front and organic rear (both Wagner Thermoquiet). The AutoZone pads are both semi-metallic (Duralast Gold). I had one dealer guy physically look at some pads and tell me they’re both semi-metallic, so I would be depending on his ability to visually judge the difference.*

The pads from the stores are about \$51 to \$62, with a lifetime warranty, whereas the ones from the dealer are \$203. What should I do?”

Halderman: The name is mostly marketing. Almost every pad has ceramic in the mix and there are not standards for the amount before they are called that or almost any other term. I would suggest:

1. Purchase the exact factory pads
2. Purchase a known brand
3. Ignore the label or what they are called. There are too many variables to consider. For example, GM used (learned an engineer at the Vandalia plant), that they use over 200 different recipes depending on vehicle options and driver feel. That is just for GM vehicles! Most brake pads today are classified as non-asbestos organic (NAO) meaning that they do not contain asbestos but instead contain synthetic fibers such as Kevlar. I know the cost is a consideration but how often will the brakes be replaced? If you use good quality pads from a known manufacture, then you will get many years of service from them without excessive brake dust or noise.

