

# Tips On Exterior Preparation, Protection

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Waxing a car, at its best, has never been an enjoyable activity. Correctly applying a coat of wax can take most of your day. It often means hours of buffing, followed by tedious residue removal.

There is also the constant worry of an accidental "slip of the hand" resulting in a trace of wax being applied over adjoining rubber. This deceptively simple mistake results in a nightmare of a white streak forever decorating the black trim.

To top it all off, the "finished product" never seems to meet your expectations. How did it feel after you spent an entire "day off" to reach your goal of a beautiful, sparkling automobile, only to discover — after backing into the sunshine — smears! streaks! swirls!

The imperfections were always there, just hidden in the protection of the shade. You probably thought, "Oh, I'll fix that! Where's the towel?"

Good luck. The problem is not one you can fix at this stage, my friend. It began the moment you decided to buy that can of wax.

Let's discover what causes poor shine, streaking and early deterioration of a waxed finish.

A car's surface has many enemies, with sunlight and acid rain heading the list. Oxidation (excessive drying) begins soon after an automobile leaves the factory. The paint starts to lose its natural oils and elasticity each time it's washed and during exposure on the dealer's lot. Sunlight, even briefly, burns the paint, vinyl, rubber and plastic just as it burns your own skin. You know how long that takes!

When you add environmental hazards — such as acid rain residue, sulfuric and hydrochloric acids from catalytic converters, and throw in nature's contribution of tree sap, bird droppings, bug tar — it's a jungle out there! Don't fool yourself by thinking you can just wash away all of this "dull film." The damage did not appear overnight and a wash and wax is not going to remove it.

## Deep-Cleaning The Exterior

How do we enhance — and at the same time, protect — the delicate surfaces on our prized automobiles?

It begins with the most important aspect of proper detailing, the deep-cleaning, or pre-wax cleaning.

I cannot state the importance of this step strongly enough. If you are a concours competitor or simply want the best shine possible, the fact remains the same — the world's



*Pre-Wax Cleaning Is The Most Important Aspect Of Proper Exterior Detailing*

finest wax will not produce the desired result if applied over dull, soiled paint or old wax. A fresh, virgin surface is absolutely necessary to assure uniformity and clarity of the wax shine.

The process requires a lot of time and effort, but keep in mind, you clean everything, even the rubber and plastic. When was the last time you polished your tail light lenses?

Be sure and have plenty of those indispensable 100 percent cotton wash cloths, towels and old soft diapers. (Note: terry wash cloths can scratch soft lacquer paints and new diapers contain lanolin, which causes streaking if they are used to remove and buff wax).

You should also have on hand a good automobile detail brush. These are specially designed with extra long, soft bristles (unlike toothbrushes) to protect the finish and reach tight spaces around lettering, trim, wiper arms, grills, etc.

Choosing a "cleaner" may prove to be difficult. You must not use a product containing abrasive or caustic materials. This just about eliminates a quick trip to that "ever faithful" auto store.

Today's high-tech paints are very thin and scratch easily. I have tested many of the most popular pre-wax cleaners by applying them on a small area and giving them the "sunlight" test. The results left a lot to be desired. All scratched, or worse, removed healthy paint with every stroke. Abrasive

cleaners should be avoided unless you enjoy "living on the edge."

Petro-chemical based cleaners are not much better. Rubber and vinyl are literally "dissolved" and stripped of surface oils by these harsh chemicals. They burn and erode today's micro-thin paints, with the new water based varnishes used by GM, and now Mercedes, being extremely susceptible.

These new paints are presently being tested by most manufacturers and will be the "paint of the future" due to savings of cost, labor hours, and environmental contaminants. Car care products haven't changed in 50 years, but believe me, your paint has.

What alternative does one have to this bombardment of chemicals and abrasives? How can you ask a pre-cleaner to remove this surface damage without harming the healthy layers?

In Part One of this series (March Mustang Times) I discussed the wonderful cleaning properties of citric acid. It is a neutral astringent with the ability to penetrate and release impurities and dead paint, without so much as a scratch on the softest clear coat.

When it's suspended in moisturizing oils to capsulize these deposits, you have a "miracle" cleaner with the unique ability to virtually deep-clean every surface on your automobile and replace precious moisture at the same time.

Because most cleaners must be selective in their purpose, it can take several different products to clean paint, chrome, rubber, etc. Citric acid cleans them all. Just try it on a rubber bumper. You'll be truly amazed!

Saturate a soft wash cloth or diaper and apply strong, even pressure and work a small area at a time. Turn the cloth frequently, as it will quickly become black and "gooey." This will be mixed with color (dead paint) when rubbing on the body metal or fiberglass. Don't try to do the entire car in one day, unless you can solicit the help of a friend and work a quarter section at a time.

To check your progress, occasionally pull your car into the sun. The best method for assurance that you have reached the optimum level of perfection is to re-apply the cleaner over part of the area you just finished. Use the sunshine to compare visually, and your sense of touch to feel the difference.

You'll soon be able to move right along, without interruption. This is where the detail brush comes in handy. Simply pour the cleaner directly onto the bristles and work it around lettering, gaskets, trim, grills, etc. This simple procedure will save a tremendous

amount of time.

A last, extremely important rule: never leave a deep-cleaned surface exposed to the elements. It must have protection, or the vicious cycle starts all over.

See you next month for Part Three: Interior Cleaning and Absorbant Surface Treatment.

*(In addition to their Zymol distributorship, Irene Bernardo and her husband, John, participate in shows, driving events and conduct car enhancement clinics, with more than 20 car clubs each year. They also professionally prepare privately owned automobiles for concours competition. In 1990 they became involved with the American classic car circuit by adding the substantial Mustang and Corvette markets. The Bernardos feel they share the common goal of a long and fruitful relationship with their fellow Mustang enthusiasts. The couple attends several MCA national shows each year to offer free demonstrations on auto detailing. This three-part series of articles on detailing began in the March issue of The Mustang Times and will conclude in the May issue.)*

### Late Model Rules Corrected

One section of the 1991-92 Judging Rules Book relating to the Late Model Street Driven Class contained errors which have resulted in some confusion.

Paragraphs five and six of the rules were printed as follows:

"Cars in this class will be judged for workmanship, cleanliness, and condition only. Undercarriages and engine compartments will not be judged.

"Cars in this class must keep hoods closed. Trunks/hatchbacks must be open."

These paragraphs were in error.

The paragraphs should read:

"Cars in this class will be judged for workmanship, cleanliness, and condition only. Undercarriages and engine compartments **will** be judged.

"Cars in this class must keep hoods, trunks/hatchbacks **open.**"

## Business Coalition Formed To Oppose New Fuel Standards

Greg Dana, vice president of the Association of International Automobile Manufacturers, has announced the formation of a 53-member business coalition to oppose tougher federal fuel economy standards.

The newly proposed requirements for fuel economy "will limit what consumers can buy," Dana said.

The domestic and foreign automobile industries joined forces to form the Coalition for Vehicle Choice "to demonstrate that the battle over fuel economy is not simply a fight between automakers and environmentalists," according to Jeffrey B. Conley, the coalition's executive director.

The coalition includes groups representing iron and steel manufacturers, electrical contractors, police chiefs, cattlemen and farmers. Conley said all these groups "recognize that a proposal to require new-car fleets to average 40 miles per gallon by the year 2001 could cost jobs and money."

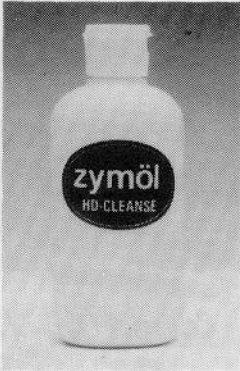
Dan Becker, a spokesman for the Sierra Club, branded the coalition a ploy to disguise the auto industry's opposition to the proposed new standards.

"They're wrong if they think a phony coalition is going to help them win," Becker was quoted by Associated Press as saying. "People recognize that fuel efficiency is the key to curbing global warming and freeing us from having to send troops to the Middle East to fight for our energy security."

Numerous other groups, however, have taken exception to the strict new fuel efficiency requirements which will be debated in Congress this year.

Some classic car clubs have opposed the new requirements on the grounds that the drastic new fuel efficiency standards would virtually eliminate high performance vehicles from the market place.

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