

ATTENTION TO DETAIL WINS EVERY TIME

Detailing your Mustang properly for a show is as simple as a few easy steps. Imagine your car when it was first purchased, that is how you want it to look to the judges. The judges of all the classes will be looking for the same basic ingredients: workmanship, condition, and cleanliness.

The Occasional Driven judging sheet begins with the Interior, so lets start there.

Clean door hinges, scuff plate, and kick plates—areas prone to collecting dust, shoe marks, and dirt in the grooves. Wipe down all surfaces with a damp cloth then use a toothbrush to clean items such as air vents, ashtrays, and coin holders. One place often overlooked is the shifter boot and emergency brake area. A small brush works well to get into these hard-to-reach places. Wipe down your dash and any other surfaces. Brush off your foot pedals and clean the surface of them thoroughly. Avoid using tire dressing on the pedals or steering wheel!

Floor mats should be clean and vacuumed, though in many cases, they will need to be removed from the car for judging. A rule to go by is: If the car has a "hook" to keep the floor mats in place, it is OK for the mats to be in the car. Otherwise, remove the mats for judging.

The carpet needs to be vacuumed and clean. If there are spots or stains, shampoo the carpet with a good-quality carpet cleaner. Check the headliner for hair or spots. Clean your windows, removing smudges and fingerprints. Leave nothing in the interior of the car such as garage door openers, umbrellas, stuffed animals, hats, etc.

Once you have finished the interior, move to the engine compartment. Detail your engine with a good degreaser, making sure not to get important electronic components wet. (Wrap the fuse box with a plastic bag.) Dry all attached parts (hoses and wires) with a soft cloth. It is important to clean all areas, including spark plug areas, manifolds, and battery compartments. Clean the firewall and inside fenders as well as the radiator support and cover. If it is visible, it needs to be clean and dust free. If there are problem areas, such as loose tape, (one of my pet peeves) broken hoses, or tarnished chrome, replace or clean thoroughly. Don't forget to give proper attention to the under side of your hood or the attached fire mat, as well as hinge supports and fender edges. Polish any chrome parts and make everything shine; judges appreciate the attention to detail.

Moving on to the outside of your car,

wash with a good-quality car soap. Pay close attention to wheels, fender wells, and bumpers. Remove any tar and bugs that have been collected. As you wash the car, look for any problem areas on your trim, paint, wheels, or tires that you may need to address when the car is clean. Dry with a soft cloth and wax to a high gloss. Clean and polish your wheels and tires. Wheels should be cleaned on the outside and the inside so that when the judge looks at the wheel, it is clean all the way through. Secure any trim or rubber weather stripping that has become loose. Any chrome parts, such as tailpipes, need to be polished. Clean your windows and mirrors with glass cleaner that will not streak.

When cleaning inside the trunk, don't forget the hinge area and lip around the trunk. Owners may overlook these areas, but the judges won't. Make sure the wiring harness in the trunk is clean and secure. Vacuum carpet and trunk mats. If your car came with a spare, make sure the spare and jack are in the car and secure. The use of the spare tire cover in a '64 1/2 - '73 is discouraged because the judges can't judge what they can't see. And the judges will not remove the cover for you or touch ANY PART of your car, except the door handle, if the owner is not present! Owners of '74 - current models have a hidden spare. Someone should be present to lift the cover for the judges. If the trunk/hatch is locked during judging, all deductions in that area will be taken. Every attempt will be made to get the car owner to rectify the situation.

If your car is in a class that requires undercarriage judging, thoroughly inspect and clean the undercarriage. Rust, caked-up dirt, leaves, and bugs should be removed. Many owners jack the car up and crawl underneath with brushes and cloths to clean floor pans, gas tank, pipes, and suspension. Pay special attention to these areas. If you can see it, so can the judges. Don't let this worry you; the judges should not spend more than a few seconds looking under the car. They will only spend more than a few seconds when they are training a new judge.

The first time you completely detail your car, expect it to be an all-day job. Take your time; look in every nook and cranny. Most of all, don't give up; it will seem like a daunting task, but in the end it will be well worth the work. Walking away with a trophy for your hard work will be satisfying.

Information on obtaining your judging sheet is located on the back of the dash card. Do it as soon after the show as possible.

It may take a few weeks to receive, so be patient. This will tell you what you may have missed or where improvements can be made. Don't be discouraged; comments on the judging sheet are meant to help and by no means should be taken as criticism.

You're ready for your first MCA show! Talk with other Mustang enthusiasts, learn all you can. Most of all, ask questions. Any MCA member or official will be happy to help make your show experience worthwhile.



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