



Detail Guide

Wash & Wax - Paint Care

Car Washing

Before you start wetting and soaping your car, look down. Not at your feet, but at the wheels. Chemical wheel cleaners are often needed for really dirty wheels, but they lose their strength on wet surfaces. Ditto for the tires so take care of those items first. Be sure to use the correct chemical (see Wheel Care section), and make sure the wheels are cool, or you may end up dulling the finish.

Laying suds to sheetmetal is a major opportunity to bond with your ride. Now's the time to caress every curve, check each gap and groove, and examine all the external parts. It's important to pay close attention because just slopping on the soap and hosing it off is only half of what you need to do. There are several other things to keep in mind when the bucket's in hand and your car's coming clean.

Suds & Soap

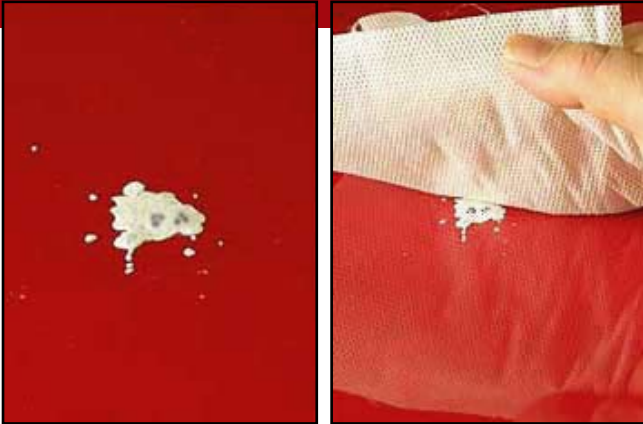
What kind of soap are you using? Be sure to keep all non-automotive wash soaps far, far away—dishwashing detergents and other sudsing cleaners are formulated to remove grease and wax (which are not too chemically different from automotive wax). Keep in mind that it's not the amount of suds which matters, but how the detergent cleans. Automotive washing agents such as Mothers® California Gold Car Wash are the way to go. The right car wash should be strong enough to clean off all of the dirt, bugs, tar and grime yet not strip the important stuff (like waxes and sealers) from your paint.

Pre-Treating

A smart way to deal with really heavy dirt, sap, bird droppings and other stuck-on stuff is to pre-treat the extra-dirty sections of bodywork. Hit that nasty spot with a spritz of some extra soapy water or Mothers® Showtime® Instant Detailer. Soak the offending area liberally, and allow the solution to penetrate before washing the entire car.

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withdrawing deposits



Oh no! Tweety Bird has left a little present on your hood! To remove it and other stubborn deposits, apply a concentrated amount of car soap and water and let it soak before washing. Or use Mothers® Showtime® Instant Detailer or Mothers FX® Spray Wax to clean up the mess. (And next time, don't park under a tree.)

Washing and Rinsing Your Car

Try to avoid washing a car in direct sunlight, and never wash a car that's hot. Hose down the vehicle with a thick, strong stream of water (but not a narrow jet). Concentrate on loosening dirt and unwanted buildup. If using a bucket of soapy water have it ready before you move on to wetting the vehicle down. You shouldn't let any water dry on the paint while filling up the bucket. If it's unusually hot or you must wash your car in the sun, be sure to keep it wet and cool with regular spraying of water.

shady subject



Hey, what's wrong with this picture? This guy is washing his car in the hot sunlight. But you know better, right? Stay in the shade if you can

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rub a dub-dub



A wool wash mitt works best but rinse it often and work from the top down. If you drop it in the dirt it's better to replace it or at least make certain you've removed every speck of debris or you might end up scratching the finish.

Use a clean wash mitt or a large-pore sponge (natural or synthetic will work though neither is as effective as the wash mitt). Some experts recommend using an ultra-soft synthetic or animal-hair brush that's effective for working dirt from cracks. Rinse the cleaning device with the hose frequently, and soak it periodically in the bucket as you clean. Work from the top of the vehicle down, because the lower portions of the car are usually the dirtiest. There's no sense in dragging the filth from the bottom of the car to the top. If the vehicle is excessively dirty, it might make sense to mix a second bucket of water.

keep things moist



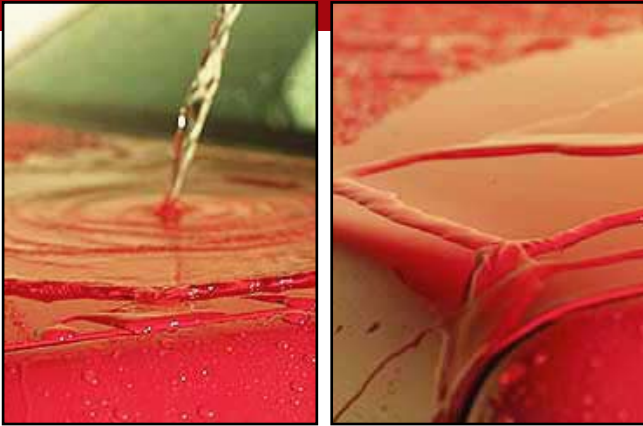
If you must wash when it is hot outside apply extra water on cleaned surfaces to keep them from drying, or you will probably get some water spots.

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Don't let water dry on any surface as you wash—spray surplus water onto the vehicle after you attend to every couple of body panels. Another key "Don't" involves the mitt, sponge or rag you're washing with. If it falls on the ground, replace it or clean it thoroughly before reuse. No matter how hard you try to shake and rinse it some small particles will be left behind, and they are likely to scratch your paint. It's smart to toss the wash mitt in the washing machine after each car wash (as particles of dirt will certainly be trapped in the fibers), but at the very least submerge it in a bucket of water and give it a good strong rinsing.

wax 'n dry



Before drying off, run a slow flooding flow of water over all surfaces of the car. This will encourage a sheeting action, pulling more water off the paint as the flow passes.

sheeting action



Using Mothers® Showtime® Instant Detailer, Reflections® Spray Wax and Mothers FX® Spray Wax on a wet, freshly washed car is a quick and easy way to turn up the shine. Just spray one section at a time covering area liberally, spread the instant detailer or spray wax around evenly with a fresh microfiber towel, if using a spray wax let it dry to a haze and remove all promptly with another clean

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Another great way to kick up the shine while saving time is by using a spray wax on your car's freshly washed exterior as you dry it. Mothers® Reflections® Spray Wax and Mothers FX® Spray Wax both offer their own unique benefits, and both can be applied to a wet surface. Work around the vehicle one section at a time. Start by spraying the wax onto a clean towel, or directly onto the paint. Next, spread it around evenly, just as you would with a traditional wax. Let it dry to a dull haze and then buff it to a shine with a fresh towel. It's just that easy. This will leave your car shining like new and with an additional layer of protection between regular detailings.

Drying Successfully

When drying, start with the glass because a dry towel works best there. Dry the vehicle as soon as you finish washing it, and be sure to use soft cotton or microfiber towels. We recommend one in each hand.



what a drag

Cotton or microfiber towels are the best choice for drying. A squeegee or chamois can damage paint when you drag it across the surface.

With cotton towels, quality is important—the thicker the towel's nap, the more pile there is to cushion the dirt and debris picked up while drying. Also, make sure the towel has not lost its softness, or it may be too abrasive on the finish. Even though microfiber has less of a nap than cotton, it dries well without scratching. Microfiber towels are able to hold more water than cotton, pound for pound, and use super-small synthetic fibers that won't scratch your paint. If you can't dry the entire car quickly enough you'll probably wind up with water spots. A quick burst of detailing spray (try Mothers® Showtime® Instant Detailer) on the offending spots followed by a towel will remove all but badly etched water spotting which requires a cleaner or polish and some extended attention.



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A valuable step in the drying process involves further washing. It's difficult to thoroughly clean jamb areas on any vehicle without getting water in the interior. Hit the difficult-access sections after drying the rest of the vehicle. A clean, damp cotton towel can swipe away most of the offending dust and dirt, and a follow-up with Mothers® Showtime® Instant Detailer will provide an easy clean.



More Drying “Don’ts”

We've discovered some drying "Don'ts" that may surprise you. First off, don't use the drying towels to remove dirt that you missed while washing—you risk scratching your paint.

We also don't recommend using a natural or synthetic chamois for everyday drying. The chamois material, especially a natural chamois, develops a large amount of friction when being pulled across your paint, almost to the point of suction. The problem: this "dragging traction" is sufficient enough to distort and/or strip wax from your paint. Also, there is very little nap to a chamois (synthetic or natural), so any particles not washed off have a higher chance of being rubbed directly onto the paint and causing scratches and swirl marks.

Another sensible "Don't" is to stay away from squeegees. They can pick up dirt and drag it through your paint for as long as you wipe. So unless you're dealing with glass, don't squeegee.

Be sure to use limited amounts of detergent when washing cotton car towels, and don't dry them with fabric softener—it leaves trace chemicals in the towels that can contaminate your wax. Also, a hot wash with a cold rinse for your cotton towels can help reduce lint.