

Car Polishing

Vehicle polishing is among those key locations which many individuals do not focus on very much. It is such a shame since next to the engine or gearbox of a vehicle, the paintwork of a car or truck is the next most expensive part of a vehicle to replace or repair. In fact, it is this key location that offers the first impression for yourself, your customers or potential buyers. It also



clearly specifies how much care the owner puts into the vehicle. By frequently maintaining the vehicle's paint, the trade in value of the vehicle will be more than likely be much higher as a bonus for your effort.

Aside from this, we are talking about maintaining paint so that your vehicle keeps that new shiny look for a long time, no matter how old your vehicle is.

As paint ages, there are many natural and unnatural elements that will affect the paint of a vehicle. This neglected paint fading, oxidation and swirl marks depending on what it might be, can have dire consequences on a vehicle's paint in the long run. If the paint breaks down, expect having to spend thousands of dollars at a paint or body shop to recover the paintwork on your vehicle. To keep a vehicle's paint look like new, it needs to be maintained and protected, just like the engine needs new oil and oil filters every so often. To protect the paint, you can use a waxing treatment. This is

a fast and cheap way to help protecting the paint, but just waxing is not enough to keep the paint from getting damaged. Direct sun light, road chemicals, ice and snow and washing will eventually affect the paint quality.

What is the difference between car wax and polish?

Firstly, let's start with the question What is a Wax?

A wax in its natural form comes in many guises from vegetable waxes i.e. carnauba to animal waxes i.e. bees wax. It is the natural properties of some of these waxes that make them ideal for use in car waxes.

The most popular for use in the automotive industry is carnauba wax.

What makes it the most ideal wax is that it is:

1. virtually insoluble in water, so won't immediately disappear after each wash or rain shower
2. a melting point of 82-86 °C so will withstand the high daylight summer temperatures without melting off your car
3. although one of the hardest waxes to be found in its natural, it produces a durable and very glossy finish when combined with other waxes/ingredients used to produce a softer product that can be more easily applied to paintwork.

Most car waxes will therefore be a combination of the natural wax, solvents, silicone fluids, other waxes and colorants. Some will also contain abrasives, depending on the product being developed but for the purposes of this article we are looking to compare the "pure" wax vs polish. In giving your paintwork its shine, your wax will effectively be "smoothing" out the surface of the paint by "filling" in many of the imperfections in the paintwork.

Unfortunately if your paintwork is suffering from oxidation, dullness or swirls there is only so much "filling" that the wax can achieve and all you are effectively doing is covering up and hiding the true nature of why your car is not looking as good as it should. One other category of "wax" we have not yet considered is the "synthetic wax" or "sealant". Again, these have various other added ingredients that change how the product adheres to your paintwork giving a longer lasting and more durable finish.

The difference between waxes and sealants is again a subject on its own and I will explore this further in a future article.

However, you won't find a car wax made of just 100% pure carnauba.



What is a Car Polish?

In contrast to a wax a car polish is a product that uses an abrasive action to remove very fine layers of the top coat protection to flatten out the surface to ensure an equal reflection of the light and thus a highly polished look. Such products come in varying degrees of abrasiveness from medium to ultra fine. The quality modern polish will be made of what is known as diminishing abrasives which break down into further smaller particles as they are worked on the paint thus getting finer and finer the more they are polished into the paint. This avoids the need to go through varying steps of abrasiveness in different products to achieve a highly polished look. Many polishes also contain gloss enhancing oils which further help to provide a deep look shine to the paint work. What however is missing by just applying your polish is any protection to the polished paintwork, which is where your wax comes in to protect all the hard work you have just put in polishing and achieving that deep gloss shine. Which, using your wax

or sealant, you will now protect for a few to several months (depending on how often your car is used, how it is stored, the wax you have used and the environment). It is worth mentioning at this stage another product group called Glazes.



A true glaze is a product that does not contain any abrasives but a mix of gloss enhancing oils and Kaolin which effectively fills in any remaining imperfections in the paintwork to ensure a bright evenly reflective surface.

It is good practice, especially on some of the softer modern paint finishes not to use a pure polish too often but to use a glaze more frequently than you polish to maintain the gloss and look of your paintwork. This will ensure you are not continually taking off micro layers of the clear coat each time you detail your car and thus ensuring the longer term effectiveness of your paint's protection.

As with polishing however it is vitally important after using a glaze that you immediately seal it in with your wax or sealant otherwise the fine fillers and oils that provide the smooth reflective surface will be washed away in the first rain or next wash.

How often should you polish and wax your new Vehicle?

I would first say that I would hope that having spent what is likely to be a reasonable amount of money on a new vehicle, that I would not have to detail it straight from the showroom. However, having visited a fair number of showrooms in the past I am sometimes horrified by the condition of the paintwork on some vehicles.

Now many dealers will try and flog you a "paint protection" package ranging from just a few hundred to several hundred and even more than a thousand dollars. Unfortunately, many of these packages are not worth the amount of money charged by the dealerships, some of whom make nearly as much on the protection package as they do profit on the car!

The first step...

Assuming you have not purchased one of these packages and are looking to detail your new vehicle as soon as you get it on your driveway I would first wash your car with a good quality car shampoo and then dry it with a new microfiber drying towel. This first step will enable you to inspect your paintwork and make the decision on what to do next.

Although many new cars may still look very shiny after this first step, it is quite possible that some will have spent a considerable amount of time outside in between leaving the production line and arriving at the dealers. Much of this time may also have been in and around industrial areas



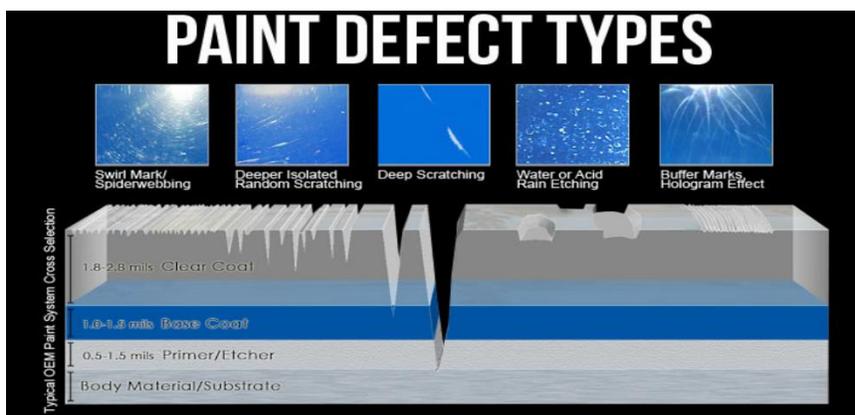
where it would have been exposed to industrial fall-out that can attach itself to the paintwork, but be invisible to the eye.

If this is the case you will notice that lightly rubbing your fingers over the paintwork it will feel rougher

than expected. Some detailers even recommend doing this with a thin plastic bag over your hand as it seems to highlight the roughness even more.

How to tackle rough paintwork

If you do feel some roughness in your paintwork I would recommend considering claying your car. If however your paintwork feels smooth and looks in good shape the next step is fairly simple.

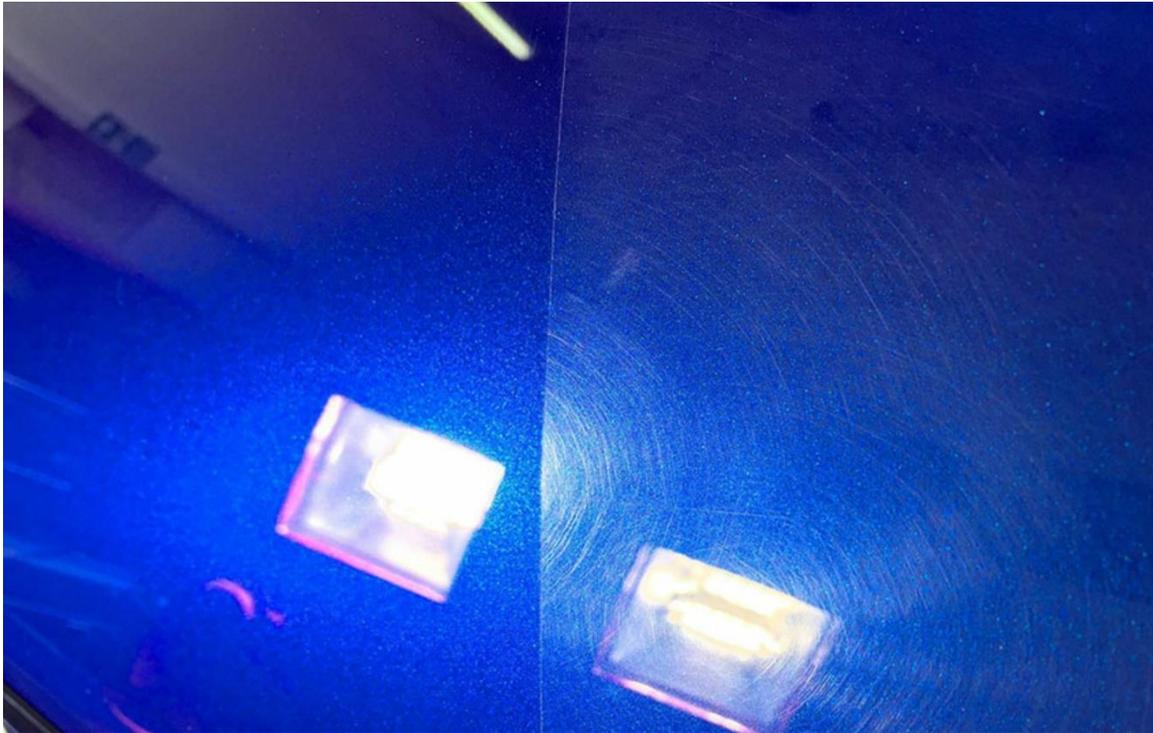


You just need to look at applying a car wax or sealant. Your choice of wax or sealant may depend on the time of year you want to apply and whether you are looking to apply one, sealants tending to be longer lasting in winter and pure carnauba waxes preferred in the summer

months if you do not have much time or inclination to apply more regularly.

Now what if having washed your car you discover that the paintwork is not as in good shape as you had hoped, with light swirls and scratches. If this is the case you will want to consider applying a polish or light swirl removal compound to remove these issues, before applying your wax or

sealant.



On-going car cleaning regime

Now depending on the season and how you store your car will depend on your on-going regime. However, what you do not need to do is both polish and wax your car each time you wash it. If you did polish each time you washed, and did this on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, it could actually damage your paintwork over-time, depending if your polish contains a degree of abrasive. If you are in the summer months in a not too dusty environment you should be able to simply keep on top of your shine with the use of a spray detailer and good quality microfiber towel. If however your car does get a little dirtier then as in the very first step simply wash with a good quality car was shampoo and dry with a microfiber drying towel.

