

How to Protect Your Car for the Winter

Get Ready Winter's Coming

Winter comes around once every year so there is no excuse not to be prepared for it, so use your time now and prepare your pride and joy for the onslaught. Winter weather takes its toll on our cars paint, with rain, sleet, snow, frost, salt and road grime which all conspire to dull our paint's finish and inflict swirl marks. Give your car a fighting chance and seal in the shine now before the bad weather is upon us. If you prefer why not let Passion Detailing take care of protecting your car from the winter weather.

What's the Damage?

Your car is more likely to pick up scratches at this time of the year due to all the extra debris on the roads in the form of salt and sand etc. Prepare your car for the winter and protect it against.

- Dried out rubber, trim and leather.
- Scratches in the clear coat.
- Road salt.
- Acid rain.
- Oxidation.

Start Clean

First off you need to start with a clean car, use this opportunity to check and replace worn out wash mitts and microfiber drying towels. It's cheaper and quicker to replace these items than it is to remove the swirls you will put into the paint through using worn out equipment. Always use a quality car wash solution and mix it to the recommended dilution ratio. The suds will help to float the dirt and grime off the car without damaging the paint.

N.B. See the 'how to wash your car' document for a detailed description on safe washing technique.

Now we need to check the paint surface for bonded surface contaminants, put your hand into a plastic sandwich bag and feel the surface of the paint, if it feels rough you need to clay it. The reason we clay the paint surface is to remove these contaminants so that the sealant we are going to apply will be able to bond to the surface better, meaning it will last longer and leave a better shine.

See the 'how to clay your car' document for details.

Polish

You should use this as an opportunity to top up the shine, inspect the paint surface for any below surface defects, e.g. scratches, swirls. You can apply a good cleaner wax or cleaner polish by hand or machine if you are competent and have the tools. It is beyond the scope of this document to discuss the different polish and pad combinations that can be used to remove below surface defects, or how to machine polish paint. Cleaner wax and cleaner polish can be used by hand and will be quick and easy and provide pleasing results. These products contain abrasives and fillers so will reduce the appearance of any swirls and in the case of the cleaner wax leave a top coating of wax to protect the paint surface.

Seal

The reason we use a sealant and not a wax in winter is that the man made sealant will last longer than a natural carnauba wax. Choose a good quality synthetic sealant, which will provide protection against the elements while giving a great long lasting shine. These products will last months and continue to protect long after the wax has worn off.

Wheels and Tyres

Keep your wheels clean with your favourite wheel cleaner, always work on one wheel at a time and follow the manufactures recommendations.

N.B. Please be sure and use a wheel safe cleaner for your type of alloy wheels. Your wheels can now be clayed, polished and sealed.

Tyres take a lot of abuse all year round and it is important to keep them clean and protected. Give them a good wash with a strong car wash solution and be sure to use a dedicated brush or mitt. It is important not to use this on the rest of the car to avoid cross contamination. Protect the rubber with a good quality dressing, the old adage you get what you pay for is true here as with most products, the cheaper dressings leave a cheap looking high gloss coating on the tyres. A good dressing will protect your tyres and keep them hydrated and protected longer.

Glass

Winter tends to dump a lot of rain and snow on us, visibility is also poor with extended hours of darkness. It's equally important to clean and seal our windscreen, a good sealant will lay down a hydrophobic barrier on the glass that will stop rain pooling, so the rain will run off the edge of the screen. The result will be that you will use your wipers less and visibility will be greatly improved due to less water on the windscreen. The new nano technology products are amazing they will do this for months and also stop frost forming on the screen.

N.B. If your glass is tinted please use a tint safe ammonia free cleaner, ammonia will also attack vinyl, leather and rubber, it is also harmful to your health.

Waffle weave microfiber towels are the choice for glass cleaning.

Start on the inside of the passenger's window, roll it down an inch or so spray your cleaner onto the towel and clean the top part of the glass, now roll it up and clean the rest, buff off with a clean towel when dry. From the passenger seat clean the whole of the inside of the windscreen.

Tip, use a horizontal wiping motion on the inside and vertical on the outside, this will make it easier to locate parts that you have missed when you're buffing the residue off.

Leave the rear window until last as it can be quite difficult to clean, the best way is to use the back of your hand.

Remember your wiper blades, keep them clean with a damp cloth, don't use vinyl or rubber dressing on them as this will cause streaking. At this time remember to fill up your washer fluid bottle, use a wash fluid that will clean the winter grime and prevent freezing on the screen.

Now finish off with a rain repellent coating on the outside of the glass, these coatings form a physical or chemical bond with the glass and enable the rain to sheet off.

Tip, if it has been a while since you last detailed your windows there may be a build up of dirt in the corners. Use a tooth brush or detailing brush along with your cleaner to shift it. Lay a microfiber along the base of the window, spray the brush and clean the glass, if this doesn't shift the dirt use an aggressive polish.

Summary

A ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, spend some time now before the cold weather arrives preparing your car for the winter months will help to keep it looking good, protected and easier to keep clean.