

How to Wash Your Car

Why Wash Your Vehicle

Our vehicles live outside for most of their lives and pick up all sorts of contaminations, acid rain, tar spots, tree sap, bird bombs etc. All these environmental contaminants have the potential to dull the shine and eat into the paint surface. That is why we need to remove them from the paint as quickly as possible before they have time to bond or etch into the surface. The Last Step Protection (LSP) that we apply will protect the paint against these contaminants, these products sit on the pain surface and act as a sacrificial barrier protecting against UV rays and dirt and leave the vehicle easier to clean.

What You Will Need

- Quality wash solution
- Good quality wash mitt
- 2 x buckets
- Grit guard inserts
- Microfiber drying cloth
- Wheel cleaner
- Older wash mitt (for wheels)
- Long reach wheel brush
- Soft wheel brush

What do I need to know?

Well first of all the observant will have noticed there is no mention of a sponge in the list of items above. Microfiber and lambswool wash mitt's have replaced the old 'car wash sponge' as the tool of choice. Let me explain why. Imagine your nice fresh paintwork hidden underneath a coating of dirt and grit, these particles will have sharp edges. Now if you were to look closely at the face of a 'car wash sponge' you will notice it's flat, especially when pressed against the surface of your car. When you use one of these sponges to wash your car some of the sharp particles of grit will become trapped between the face of the sponge and the surface of the paint, they have nowhere to go because of the flat face of the sponge. So when you wipe the sponge over the car you are dragging the grit over the paint which creates fine scratches. These scratches or swirl marks are highly visible in bright sun light or under petrol station lighting. Swirl marks dull the paint finish and look terrible. When you look at the wash mitt you will see it has a nice soft deep pile, it has been developed to get around the problem of the car wash sponge. These mitts contain approximately 200,000 strands of open ended microfiber per

square inch and can hold up to 7 times their weight in water. Using one will loosen the dirt and safely trap it in the microfiber strands so there are no swirls or scratches on your paint surface. Now when you load up your wash mitt with wash solution and begin to wash the paint, remember the grit particles? They are now absorbed into the mitt and held away from the paint so that they do not cause any damage.

What shampoo should I use?

There are so many on the market that it comes down to personal preference, but your shampoo should not contain any harsh detergents and have good lubricity. We like plenty of suds, these have the benefit of suspending the grit in the wash solution so that it can be rinsed of the car without causing any micro marring to the surface. A harsh detergent will strip the wax or sealant of the paint and leave it dried out and unprotected. Fairy liquid is a big no no as this will remove all your wax and sealant from the paint.

What's the two bucket method I hear people talking about?

As the name suggests we use two buckets, one for the wash solution and a second to hold clean rinse water, both buckets should have a grit guard in the bottom. First soak the wash mitt in the soapy wash solution, wash a section then dunk the mitt into the rinse bucket rubbing it over the grit guard to remove more dirt, then put it into the wash solution and repeat.

Let's Get Started

Wash your car in the shade, clean the wheels first, wash and rinse one wheel at a time use your soft wheel brush and wheel cleaning solution. If you wash the bodywork first then the wheels you may end up splashing the clean paint with solution or dirt, also on a hot day the rinse water will start to dry on the paint and leave water marks, not so much of an issue in the UK but dark cars do get very hot in the sun even here.

NB Do not use any brushes or mitts for the wheels on the paint work.

Now clean the door jams, fuel filler cap etc. Carefully wash the dirt from around the fuel filler cap, the door jams, boot and bonnet. These areas tend to get quite dirty and it adds a little extra when you open the door and the jam is as clean as the rest of the car, these areas tend to get forgotten about.

Pre rinse the car with a gentle spray from a hose to loosen the dirt and wet the paint. We are not trying to blast holes in the bodywork with the pressure washer here, all you will end up doing is forcing the grit onto the paint under pressure which will result in swirl marks.

Mix the wash solution to the correct ratio for the amount of water in your bucket and follow the guidance above for the two bucket method.

Start to wash at the top as this is the cleanest part of the car, divide the car into sections and wash a section at a time, rinse and move on to the next section. In warm weather you will need to rinse more frequently so the wash solution and dirt do not dry onto the paint. Wash the lower sections last as these will be the dirtiest.

Finally give the car one last rinse, if you remove the nozzle from your garden hose and rinse the car from the highest point most of the water will sheet off leaving less to mop up.

Next dry the paint, do not use a chamois for the same reason mentioned about the sponge, instead use a quality microfiber towel designed for drying your vehicle. I like to put the towel on the car and pat it dry, the towel will absorb the water but may leave a thin film behind, this will quickly evaporate off. Remember to dress your tyres and exhaust tips!

Summary

There you have it, safe washing technique. As with most things in life the 'buy cheap buy twice' mantra applies to your products and wash tools. A quality wash solution will provide better results and last longer than a cheaper alternative.