

## Help to prolong your car's look

Spring is sprung, the grass is riz, I wonder where the birdies is? You know where they're going to be as soon as you wash your car. Bird droppings have a high acid content, so they are one of the worst threats to your car's finish. Along with tree sap and spills of gasoline or other automotive fluids, these are things you should wash off immediately.

Paints have changed over the years. And car care products have changed with them. Use the right cleaner for your car, inside and out, to get the best results. For example, a vinyl cleaner for inside the car will have some additives to help your dash resist cracking on a hot summer's day. But you want a different formulation for a vinyl roof to resist rain and dust.

Touch up any scratches or dents right away. Corrosion happens fastest to bare metal, so don't let there be any! The seven or eight litres of paint on your car are all that stand between the rust demon and your car.

Brake pads have changed, too. The new types of brake pad generate a black dust that can be difficult to clean. There are special tire and wheel cleaners that will keep your wheels looking their best. And if there is anything wrong, like an under-inflated tire or wheels needing alignment, you're more likely to spot it if you don't have to look through a screen of dirt and brake dust.

Your car's interior is also worth attention. Some auto appraisers will tell you that a clean interior has more impact on the car's resale value than the exterior. Use the right products, designed for automotive applications. Household cleaners are not designed for use in cars, and may not give you the results you want. In cars, there are typically two types of stain—protein, and oil/grease. Protein stains need an enzyme treatment, while the oil and grease stains call for a heavy duty shampoo containing degreasing agents.

Don't neglect your windows. Your vision of the road is your best defence against accidents, so don't let a cloudy windshield or back window put you in danger. Use a good quality commercial cleaner, and cut it with rubbing alcohol if you must. If any of that alcohol gets on your paint, flush it away with lots of water.

As we move into spring and summer, there's one more thing to think about—bugs. Bugs are like bird droppings on your paint, corrosive and unsightly. There are cleaners specifically formulated to remove bugs from your grill and bumpers.

And when you're cleaning your car, pop the hood and flush the bugs off the front of your radiator. Bugs will reduce the ability of the radiator to reject heat. Be careful when you're doing this not to bend the fins on the radiator—either use a hose to rinse away the bugs, or use a wire brush carefully, brushing side to side rather than up and down.

How about commercial car washes? Well, sure, but stay with the soft cloth type. If the car wash uses a brush, the bristles may get stiff or clogged with dirt and that can scratch your finish.

Is there any difference between a new car finish and a repaint? Indeed there is. New car finishes can be baked to a harder finish than is possible in a repaint situation. That doesn't mean there's any difference in the quality of the paint, but you'll have to baby the finish for the first 90 days. That means hand washing with cool water, trying to avoid extremes of heat and cold and no dry wiping.

So to make sure your car has that special glow, wash it once a week and give it a protective wax in the spring and fall. Make sure that the inside gets the same attention as the outside, and rinse away any corrosive influences (tree sap, bird droppings) as soon as possible using water.

—Automotive Industries Association of Canada

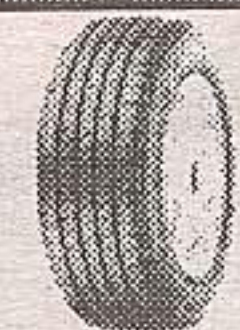
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