

# Car Care Specialties, Inc

116 South Main Street, Unit # 2, Lodi, NJ 07644-2251    TECH SERVICE (973) 767-0035    FAX (973) 767-0038  
TOLL FREE ORDER LINE (877) 796-8300    WWW.CARCAREONLINE.COM

## HOW TO PROPERLY WASH YOUR VEHICLE

How often should you wash your vehicle? The answer is wash as often as you wish, but usually once a week is sufficient. Dirt and contaminants should be removed before they have a chance to attack or permanently attach themselves to your paint. There is almost no such thing as washing your car too often.



**CHOOSING A CAR WASH:** What is the best product to use as a car wash? The correct answer is use what you like the best. There are major problems with many "household" products that some people use as a carwash. Dish detergents (Dawn Liquid, etc.) may be used, but realize that these products are designed to remove animal or vegetable fat from fired ceramic. They look at your nice coat of wax with the same hungry eyes, are hard on the paint and will strip out the emollient oils from the paint. If you enjoy re-waxing weekly, significantly ageing your paint then dish detergent is for you. Wax retailers love people who use Dawn Liquid (I send the Dawn Company Christmas Cards every year).



If you prefer to have your wax last a lot longer, you may consider using a product that is specifically designed for automotive use. Quality car washes/shampoos (same thing - most cars do not have hair) are usually pH controlled, contain gloss enhancers and some even have small amounts of water-soluble wax. Use only enough car wash to break the electrostatic/ionic bond between the dirt and your car. Start with a clean, large bucket (preferably plastic - if you kick the metal bucket, Mr. Paint Chip rears his ugly head); add a small amount of the car wash and fill with cool or warm water. Avoid hot water, as it will soften the wax. Read the directions on the car wash bottle and try reducing the recommended amount by half. If this amount does a satisfactory job, then try reducing this amount by another 25%. Keep reducing the amount of car wash until you are not happy with the results. Go back one step and you have found the minimum amount of car wash that works for your situation. I use about a half a cap full in 5 gallons of water. My personal favorite car washes are [P21S Bodywork Conditioning Shampoo](#) and [Sonax Gloss Shampoo](#). Rule of thumb #1: The more car wash, the more wax you remove. Try to

avoid powder car washes, as the un-dissolved granules may lodge under your wash mitt or sponge and scratch the paint surface.

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**WASHING TOOLS:** Rule of thumb # 2, use the least aggressive tool to wash your car. You may use a wash mitt, wash pad, sponge or brush to wash your car. (A wash mitt is designed to be worn on or held in your hand and a wash pad is a soft material covering sewn over a sponge that you hold in your hand). I prefer a wash mitt or wash pad, as the grit tends to work up into the long, soft fibers and not scratch the paint. When I dip the mitt or wash pad into the wash bucket, I give it a swirl to release the grit. If you use a mitt, every so often hold the top open, allowing the inside to fill with water, then lift straight up and as the water runs out, it "back flushes" the trapped dirt out of the mitt.

There are four basic types of wash mitts: [lambs wool](#), [synthetic wool](#), [100% cotton chenille](#) and [Microfiber](#). Wash pads are available in two flavors, [100% cotton chenille](#) or [microfiber](#). Each has an advantage and the choice is a matter of personal preference. Lambs wool is the absolute softest, but you cannot wash lambs wool in the washing machine as the detergent will destroy the leather lining. To clean a dirty lambs wool mitt, you may wash by hand in Woolite. Synthetic wool is not quite as soft as lambs wool, but may be washed in a washing machine. Cotton chenille is a long "mop" looking type of pile that is also machine washable. Microfiber is approximately the same softness as the synthetic wool and may be washed in the washing machine with Micro-Restore Microfiber [Detergent](#). The purist will use three wash mitts, one for the top half of the car (the cleanest) and one for below the trim line and one for wheels and wheel wells (brake dust will scratch your paint somewhat like mice wearing ice skates).



I am not a fan of sponges, as the flat surface of a sponge may catch dirt and act like sandpaper. I have also tried "natural sea sponges", but I could never get all the sand out of them. I do not recommend using a brush on the paint as they tend to scratch. If you want to test the softness of a particular implement, rub it against your face. If it is rough on your face, then it will be scratch city on your paint. If you have a vehicle that is very dirty and you are not worried about scratching, then a brush may be the proper tool.

**WASHING:** Make sure that your car is in the shade and the paint surface is relatively cool. Rule of thumb #3: If you can comfortably hold your hand on the body, then you may wash the car. If your wheels are relatively dirty and you need to use a wheel cleaner, then clean the wheels before you wash the rest of the car otherwise wash the wheels last.

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**WHEELS:** Most wheel cleaners work best on a dry wheel. Spray a small amount of the wheel cleaner on the cool, dry wheel and work evenly into all areas of the wheel with a [soft cloth](#), [soft sponge](#), [microfiber wheel pad](#) or [wash mitt](#). Smooth out any drips or runs so there is an even coating of cleaner over the entire wheel. Allow the wheel cleaner some time to work (3-5 minutes) then gently scrub the wheel with your cloth/sponge/pad/mitt. Some areas of a dirty wheel may require gentle brushing with a [soft wheel brush](#) to dislodge the dirt. If areas need additional cleaning, re-spray with wheel cleaner and gently brush. I repeat the warning, the keywords here "soft" and "gently". The finish on many wheels is acrylic enamel or a high-temperature lacquer that is relatively soft and may scratch. Once the dirt/brake dust is loosened, rinse thoroughly with water and dry.



**BODY:** Spray the car with a gentle spray to thoroughly wet the entire surface. Do not use a 200 P.S.I. fire hydrant spray. It is not needed and may grind the surface grime into the paint and cause scratches. Some of the Concours purists will not use a nozzle on the hose at all, they allow the water to gently flow over the surface. Start at the top of the car and work down. Wet the top; gently wash the top and then rinse. Move onto another section, such as the trunk or hood. Rewet the entire car, wash this area and then rinse the entire car. Continue this process on down the car, completing a section at a time. This way, the car wash does not dry on the paint and the paint/glass does not self dry, the main cause of water spots. The wheels are the last part to be washed. I wash the wheels with my car wash even if I have cleaned them with wheel cleaner to insure that all traces of the wheel cleaner are removed. Once you have finished washing all parts of your car you are ready to dry.

**DRYING:** You should dry the car as soon as possible. There are several methods to accomplish this. Lots of [100% cotton towels](#) are a great drying medium. Check any towels carefully as most towels contain stiff polyester fibers that scratch like hundreds of hypodermic needles. Do not assume that the 100% cotton label on the towel is telling the truth. A towel may contain up to 20% stiff polyester fibers and still



be labeled 100% cotton. The only way to check is to actually set fire to a rolled up corner of the towel. If you get a clean flame like a candlewick, then it is 100% cotton. If you see black smoke and melted fibers, then you got one of the non 100%, anxiously waiting to scratch your paint, type of towels. One person checked 130 towels all marked 100% cotton and discovered that 12 actually were 100% cotton. (I love truth in advertising.) If you like using a towel and are tired of using 6-10 towels to dry your car, you may consider using a high quality microfiber drying towel such as the [Blu-Maxx Microfiber Waffle Weave Drying Towel](#). This towel is 36" by 25" and absorbent enough to usually dry an entire car without wringing.

Microfiber will not scratch, but some edge bindings may, so make sure that any microfiber cloth that touches your paint has microfiber silk covered edges and not whip stitch polyester threads.

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Another method is to use a chamois. There are two types, natural and synthetic. The natural leather chamois contain acids, primarily tannic, that strip wax. Most synthetic chamois/towels do not seem to do a satisfactory job. One exception is the [P21S Super Absorbing Drying Towel](#). I have stopped using towels after trying this goodie and I used to be a "dyed in the wool" towel man. Lay the [P21S Super Absorbing Drying Towel](#) on the car, pick up two corners and drag the towel towards you. Wring out the excess water and then repeat. The only pressure on the paint is the weight of towel itself.

Start at the top, lay your towel on the top and then GENTLY blot up the water from the surface. If necessary, change to a dry towel and blot any remaining water. Move onto the hood or trunk and repeat. Dry the sides last, as the water will usually take care of itself on these surfaces. Driving the car to dry it may be fun, but you are re-depositing dirt on the wet surface and allowing the resulting "mud" to dry on the paint.

**WASH & QUICK DETAIL:** One Grand Company has developed a new concept in car washes. The brand new [Blue 33 Auto Wash](#) is specifically designed to work in conjunction with [One Grand Show Off](#). Mix 2 to 3 capfuls of Blue 33 in a big bucket of cool water and wash your vehicle as usual. Keep the entire surface wet as you wash and rinse all of the different panels. Once you have washed and rinsed the entire body, starting on the top (start at the hood or trunk if a convertible), spray a small amount of [One Grand Show Off](#) evenly onto the entire top and then dry with a Blu-Maxx Microfiber HD Drying Towel. Move onto the hood or trunk and repeat the misting/drying process. If you have a panel that self



dried, simply re-wet the panel with water and then spray with the [Show Off](#) and continue the misting and drying process. The results are a vehicle that will look like it was just waxed. [One Grand Show Off](#) or any quick detailer type of product is only an addendum to a coat of wax and not a replacement for wax.

**WATER SPOTS:** Once you have finished drying your car, you will usually have a few (or a lot) of water spots left on the paint. These are usually caused by minerals in the water remaining on the surface after the water has evaporated. The best way to remove these is to use a quick detailer spray such as [One Grand Show Off](#) or [Meguiars # 34 Final Inspection](#). Spray a small amount on a [Blu-Velvet Microfiber Buffing/Polishing Cloth](#) or a soft, [100% cotton flannel cloth](#) or directly on the surface and then buff out with the [microfiber](#) or [flannel](#) cloth. This will leave the paint with a "just waxed" look and free of water spots.

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**BIRD DROPPINGS:** Bird presents are one of the most damaging "natural" disasters that attack your paint. (I have never seen a Yugo attacked by a bird, but just wait till your brand new pride and joy leaves the garage. They swoop in like someone rang the free birdseed bell.) I do not know what we are feeding the birds, but what comes out of the south end of a northbound bird is highly acidic. The longer you leave these psychedelic bird presents on your paint, the more damage they will cause. The acids tend to etch a microscopic pond shaped depression in the paint. Remove as soon as possible to help minimize the damage. Instead of carrying a hose and bucket in your car, carry a bottle of no-salt seltzer water. No-salt seltzer water is nothing more than water and carbon dioxide, which will not harm your paint. When needed, take off the cap, place your thumb over the top, shake well and you have a fire hydrant that will wash the worst of the bird's thoughtful gift from your paint. Try to rub this area as little as possible. Birds use gravel to digest their food and grit is one of the major components of their presents. If you try and rub off the solids, you may scratch the paint. Once you have gotten home and had a chance to wash the area with car wash, rinsed thoroughly and dried, use a little [One Grand Show Off](#) or [Meguiars # 34 Final Inspection](#) to help remove any leftover acids. When you have the time, give the area a coat of wax. If the acids have left a slight mark in the paint, see our article on cleaning your paint. [3M Imperial Hand Glaze](#) will usually remove all traces.



3M Imperial Hand Glaze  
Prod#: 10103

**NO CONVENIENT WATER SUPPLY:** If you have the problem of no water supply to wash your car, there are a couple of solutions. You may purchase a large plastic, "pump up" style garden sprayer. These are large plastic cylinders with a pump handle on the top that pressurizes the water and a trigger controlled spray wand. Fill the cylinder with water, pump up the pressure and you are ready to wash. The second solution may be the self serve "booth with a spray wand" type of car wash. Take your car wash, bucket, wash mitt, drying towel, wheel cleaner, etc. and a pocket full of quarters. I use one of these during the winter as I do not have hot water in my garage. If you are unable to lower the wand water pressure to a reasonable level, then fill an empty bucket with water and pour it over your car. Nowhere is it written that rinse water must come directly from a hose. The high pressure water is handy to clean the inside of your wheel wells and for we salt state dwellers, clean the accumulated road salt from the undercarriage.

If you have any questions or if you need any further information, please call me at 201-796-8300. You may also find additional how to articles on our website, [www.carcareonline.com](http://www.carcareonline.com).

Very truly yours,  
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