

A tip or two on looking after your vehicle's paint work.

Article submitted by Trevor Jans of Autopaint Detailers.

From my years of experience doing paint repairs and the many conversations that I have had with people passing by as I work it is apparent that the first thing I should do is clarify some terminology.

POLISHING anything means to change the surface of that item to make it smoother and usually shiny.

We commonly refer to the process of *polishing* shoes but this is incorrect. Once the shoe "polish" has been applied the shoe appears to have changed, but after some weathering - for example wash it with detergent or walk a while in the rain - the product is removed and the shoe is back to the way it was. The surface of the shoe was not changed it was coated, *glazed*, not truly polished. Glazes tend to hide damage but they don't fix it. Compare that with a nice shiny stone picked up from a riverbed, polished to a high shine by the action of the river. You can wash it with detergent forever, it will still remain shiny because it is truly polished.

Automotive wax is not a polish it is a glaze and just like the shoe "polish" it won't fix damage it will only hide it. If the glaze is washed off then the surface of your paint will be back to what it was if not worse. The thing is wax will accumulate in any damage and as it ages wax turns white. Any damage that was hidden by the wax at first will then stand out more than if you hadn't waxed it at all.

Ideally then polish your paint with actual polish to remove minor damage before you glaze (wax) it to protect it.

Also be aware that polishing your vehicle weathers the surface of the paint down, this is necessary to restore clarity to the clear coat. Therefore polishing is a mildly destructive process. Logically if your paint doesn't have any damage to start with then it is counter productive to polish it, all you need do is maintain a glaze to protect it.

The take home point is - polishing and waxing are not the same thing and they should remain two separate activities.

About glazes.

If your automotive wax contains polishing agents you are faced with two issues. Firstly once the wax glazes the paint it can be impossible to determine if any damage has actually been polished or just hidden by the wax. The second issue is that to a greater or lesser degree the paint is being polished - weathered down - regardless of need. In effect with a product that does both your vehicle is probably getting an unhelpful polish and destructive glazing.

Glazes now come in many forms and it can be a nightmare to decide which suits best. Your choices can be boiled down to wax based and not wax based. I classify them like because the distinction is that wax based glazes tend to outlive other types by quite a bit. Your wax choices are essentially between Carnauba wax and bees wax (both actually originate from plants)

Before I get into waxes the other glazes will all largely be silicon, silicon related or silicon like products such as P.T.F.E. (a form of Teflon). You may have been asked the question "if nothing sticks to silicon then how does the silicon stick to the car?" The answer is it doesn't. It seems to stick because it basically comes off in layers and it takes a while for the last layer to come off. Therefore silicon bad, wax good, right? Not necessarily it is really more a case of horses for courses just like the polish/glaze issue.

The artificial products tend to have an extremely high gloss and tend to be comparatively easy to put on. That makes them ideal for concours events and showrooms where the vehicle is only on show for a couple of days or it spends all of its time out of the weather. The practical issue that I have with non-wax glazes, and you probably will too, is that in real life situations they do come off too quickly. The car dealers that I serve don't want to pay me or the groomers to be reglazing every week and you probably want to drive your motor home more often than you want to be glazing it.

So for me it is wax and of the two contenders carnauba wax. In its raw form bees wax is relatively soft just like a candle or crayon. Carnauba wax comes in a hard flake to which other things are added to make it workable and suitable for application to a vehicle. From my perspective that means I can control the condition of the final product through some greater extremes of hardness than would be the case with bee's wax. You may see some products advertised as 100% carnauba – be aware that means that 100% of the wax is carnauba not that 100% of the product is carnauba. Some products contain carnauba mixed with bees wax.

For you one of the most important and practical points in relation to wax is - Once you have waxed your vehicle DON'T USE DETERGENT ON IT until it is time to wax it again.

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