

10-04

The Finer Points of Detailing

What makes a regular wax job become a full concours detail? It is the extra attention given to all the small items. This attention to detail is the difference between winning and losing a concours. Even if you're not showing your car, this is the final step in completing a restoration, or achieving the highest possible standard for your car. The benefits of detailing a streetcar in this manner will help protect and preserve all the areas that normally do not receive enough attention. In the engine compartment, it's easier to spot an oil leak if the compartment is spotless. On the body, you can check for any rust (God forbid!) that may be forming in small inconspicuous places. Just the fact that everything is polished and protected will make you feel better, not to mention your car is looking it's very best. Here are some ideas to push your detailing over the top.

1. Wash and wax your car. Sounds simple enough, and it can be, IF your car has had the proper treatment over the years. Start by washing your car with a bucket of soapy water and chamois it off. You also can use a duster and a trigger wash if your car isn't to dirty. Both work well. Next polish or glaze the body panels and all painted surfaces, then apply a coat of wax for protection. Remember to always use clean towels. Now that you have your car properly waxed, you have a good starting point for some real detail work.

2. The rubber around the windows and doors will need some attention. Use rubber dressing sprayed on a towel and work it in all the rubber moldings and seals. Make sure to spend extra time with the windshield molding; this item tends to collect bugs and road grime more than any of the other pieces. Bottom line is to treat all the rubber seals and moldings including around the windows, door seals bumper trim, hood and deck lid. Treat only the rubber and not the freshly waxed paint. A small amount on a towel works best for

me. Don't be sloppy; any excess left on the paint will have to be removed.

3. Remove the license plate and the windshield wipers. These are simple things you can do for a more professional job. Some times your wiper arms need painting. This is a great time to do this.

4. Wax the door jams. Spend the extra time to do the bottom of the doors; this should protect them from any rust and/or debris from settling in. The hood and deck lid jams need waxing, don't forget to wax the underside. When I'm done waxing the outside of the car, I will continue with waxing the jams and the deck lids. This works well because you have the towel in your hand and the wax is handy, it really goes fairly fast.

5. Scrub, clean and protect all interior pieces. Remove all mats and vacuum completely, including the glove box and door pockets. Clean seat sliders, sun visors, pedals, and under the dash. Be careful with the older leather seats as they some times respond poorly to vigorous cleaning.

6. Remove the spare tire and everything else in the trunk. Start by vacuuming the complete trunk, pay special attention around the battery area. Clean your battery and check the water inside. Clean your spare and check the air pressure. Clean the tool kit and then reinstall everything.

7. To do an awesome job on your tires and rims you need to take them off the car. This does two things, it lets you really clean your wheels inside and out, and it lets you access your fender wells. The combination of doing both of these things makes for an outstanding detail job. Use a good cleaner with a scrub brush and clean your fender wells. Hose them off using a high-pressure hose nozzle. Do the same with the back of your wheels. Finish up by

polishing your wheels and dressing the tires. You can also clean up the lug nuts before you install them back on the car. Please use common sense when performing these kinds of tasks.

8. Depending on how dirty your motor is, will tell you how you need to clean it. If your motor is real dirty you may need to go to the “self serve car wash” to clean it. This works very well if you do a few things correctly. Don’t get water in places that water shouldn’t be (like the points, etc.). Don’t get the degreaser on the painted fenders. Wear eye protection and some dirty clothes. With a little luck, your engine should look pretty good within about 10 minutes. A more common approach is to put on some gloves, grab towels and start cleaning. WD-40, kerosene, simple green, and some brushes will give you a good start on cleaning up a semi-grimy motor.

9. Helpful hints –

Touch up your paint by using a small brush.

Do one thing at a time and complete it.

Double-check your work in the sunshine.

Use a detail brush to remove all wax residue.

Polish all bright work.

All these extra things add up to make an outstanding finished product.

I hope these tips can help you with your detailing. Good luck.
Wax on, Mark