

Some Porsche friends and I were talking the other day and an interesting question came up. What is the proper job sequence when you're detailing a car? There's a lot of different ways to accomplish this goal. Most of the time we don't even give it much thought. We'll just go out in the garage and start working on something. Some people that do the car show circuit have a special system that works for them. I'm going to give some insight on how I prepare a car and maybe you can incorporate my routine into your car cleaning ritual.

I like to start out by cleaning the dirtiest stuff first. This means the fender wells and the motor. Use a good cleaning product and spray down the fender wells and motor. Don't forget the under side of the engine lid, but be extremely careful of your fenders, you don't want your cleaner to over spray on the painted surfaces. Use brushes and high-pressure water to remove the old gunk. Be smart about cleaning your motor. Watch out for the electronics, and remember, sometimes it may be wiser to clean this area by hand.

Wash the outside of the car next. Use car wash soap, a sponge or wash mitt, and a chamois. Wash the car in the shade and clean the wheels and tires at this time.

Step three, is to vacuum the inside and shampoo the carpet and the floor mats. This will allow enough time for the mats to dry completely while you finish cleaning the exterior.

The fourth thing on your list of things to do is to detail the motor and the fender wells. You've already cleaned them, now you can detail them. WD-40 works well, spray it on then wipe it off. You can spend as much time as you want here, depending on what you're trying to accomplish. Just like every other project, the more time spent the better the results.

After the motor is done, close the hood and start step five. It's time to detail the outside of the car. I don't know how many of you use a buffer when detailing, but if you do, this is the time to break it out. Most of the time I'll buff-out the car twice, once with a cleaner or compound and then with a polish. Typically I will finish up by hand, with a glaze or polish and a final coat of wax. If you don't use a buffer, a product called clay can be used to get a clean surface without the use of a buffer. Follow the clay treatment with a hand polish and finish up with a coat of wax. At this time you can polish all the chrome and dress the rubber seals.

Number six on the list, is the interior. You'll need a scrub brush, a bucket of water and some interior cleaner. Use all these things to clean up the inside of your car. Use caution with leather seats, they may not respond well to vigorous cleaning. Leather often requires additional care and treatment. After you have cleaned the door panels and seats, use a protectant on all the surfaces. Remember to use high quality products along with clean towels. If your carpets and mats are dry you can reinstall them at this time.

After completing the inside and outside you're ready for the in-between. We're talking about door jams. Clean all door, hood, and trunk jams, along with the rubber seals. Pay attention to the underside of the hood and trunk lids.

Step eight, is to clean the windows. I use water and paper towels to accomplish this job. Double-check your work by taking the car outside with the driver's window facing toward the sun. This will reveal any streaks or haze you might have overlooked in the shade. This step can be done when you do your final detail.

It's time to clean the trunk. A simple once-over with the vacuum and you can call it good. If time permits you can dig a little deeper and clean the spare tire, battery, and maybe even the tool kit.

Finish up with the wheels and tires. Polish the rims if necessary, and clean the tires completely. Spend some extra time here because properly cleaned wheels and tires won't go unnoticed.

After you've completed all these steps, take the car out into the sunshine and double-check all your hard work. This is the time to use a detail brush to remove any excess wax. It's important to check out the car from all angles, looking for any imperfections. Now, you can stand back and admire your car. The car should be looking great, and you should feel proud about a job well done.

Until next time, Wax on
Mark