

Selecting Car Wax

Car wax adds longevity and shine to your cars finish, but only if you choose the right wax. Some car waxes can scratch and haze your cars finish; others can make your finish gleam, but coat the plastic parts in a visible residue. Here are a few questions you need to ask as you pore over the vast selection of car waxes available at your local auto store.

Do you want shine, or depth of color? A natural car wax like Carnauba wax will shine slightly less brightly than artificial waxes, but will give the color depth. Artificial waxes, which include most spray on and liquid waxes, shine beautifully but give a less rich color, and can emphasize minor flaws. Dark colors in particular suffer with artificial waxes. Experts suggest that dark cars be waxed only with natural waxes. For lighter cars, either natural or artificial waxes are good, depending on whether you want your cars finish to be shinier or to have more richness of color.

Does the exterior of your car include much plastic? Porous, matte plastic, especially dark plastic, reacts badly with some car waxes and acquires a conspicuous residue that may take special cleaners to remove. If your car is detailed with a lot of plastic, find a wax that is rated as working well with plastic.

How long do you want each application of car wax to last, and how much time are you willing to invest in waxing? Liquid waxes performed the best in durability and cleaning tests during a Consumer Reports comparison test of waxes. They also took the most time and effort to apply well, largely because spreading them evenly and rubbing out the streaks took considerable extra buffing. Spray on waxes were the fastest to apply, but they lasted the least amount of time and were the least effective at cleaning. Consumer Reports recommended them mainly for new cars whose finishes were in excellent condition, for owners who were willing to wax frequently, and for stopgap treatments in between treatments with liquid or paste wax. Paste waxes were similar to liquid waxes in durability and ease of application. Although paste waxes used to be notoriously time consuming to apply, Consumer Reports noted that now they are packaged with applicators that have cut their application time significantly, even and made them slightly easier to apply than liquid waxes.

Consider what quality you want the finish to have, whether the car wax will be compatible with the types of plastic on your car, how much time you want to spend applying wax, and how frequently you are willing to reapply the wax. Be honest with yourself, and do not feel pressured to buy a wax that takes a lot of effort and upkeep simply because the experts say you should. Unless the experts are going to come and maintain your car for you, pick the car wax that is right for you and your car.

About the Author

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