

Selecting Car Wax

Car wax makes your cars "new car" shine last longer and restores shine to older cars, but only if you pick the right wax for your car. 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. When you go to choose from the shelves upon shelves of car waxes at your local auto store, here are a few questions to keep in mind.

Do you want shine, or depth of color? Natural car waxes, such as Carnauba wax, give a cars finish depth, but slightly less shine. Artificial waxes, which include most spray on and liquid waxes, shine beautifully but give a less rich color, and can emphasize minor flaws. Artificial waxes are especially prone to flatten dark colors. For the best possible color on darker cars, experts suggest waxing them only with natural waxes. Lighter cars can take either kind of wax, depending on whether you value color or gleam more highly.

Is there much plastic on your car? 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 has a lot of visible plastic, make sure the wax you choose is compatible with plastic.

How durable do you want the car wax to be, and how long are you willing to spend in applying it? Liquid waxes performed the best in durability and cleaning tests during a Consumer Reports comparison test of waxes. However, because they took extra time to spread evenly and without streaking, they took the longest to apply. 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.

When you choose a car wax, consider what visual qualities are most important to you, whether you need to take the plastic detailing on your car into account, how long you are willing to take to apply wax, and how often you are willing to apply wax. Be frank with yourself about your goals, and do not feel that you should opt for a high effort, high upkeep wax just because the experts recommend it. 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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