



The Spectamax™ Car Show Prep Guide

By Matt Tori

Getting your show car ready for the judges requires more than a quick wash and dry; if you want to ensure you come home with a trophy, you need to ensure your vehicle in clean, neat, and shows well. Here are some proven tricks of the trade.

This guide is brought to you by the Spectamax, the car decal holder that attaches to your window and neatly holds all those stickers you would normally adhere to your windshield.

The Spectamax is a must for any car show participant.

Before you start:

Grab a garbage bag and two empty boxes. Start from the front and work your way to the rear (look under the seats) and toss all trash into the bag. Throw anything that belongs in the house (screwdriver, straps, etc.) in one box and put items that stay in the car such as the registration, sunglasses, chargers in the other box. Both of these boxes are removed on show day; you want to leave as little as possible in the car at the show; remember, you might be given a car participant goodie bag to pack someplace anyway.

Store the following in the glove compartment:

- owner's manual,
- maps,
- vehicle registration information (if required),
- auto club information,
- accident report form,
- notepad,
- pen,
- disposable camera,
- flashlight,
- list of emergency contact names and numbers,



- tire gauge,
- paper napkins
- the Spectamax (when not in use)
- and any other frequently needed or essential items.

Interior Cleaning:

Clean the dashboard, doorjambs, armrests, and steering wheel with Armor-All Cleaning Wipes which handle dirt without harming vinyl or leather. You can also use ordinary baby wipes, which are tough enough to clean, but will not ruin the vinyl or leather. Remove and shake out the floor mats. Using a handheld vacuum which comes with a stretch hose go over the seats and the floor. Treat spills and ink spots with hand sanitizer; its high alcohol content removes stains. Put the mats back in.

Remove your Spectamax from the windshield and clean off any residue to the suction cups may have left on the glass. Discard any expired decals from the inserts in the Spectamax and order a replacement from www.spectamax.com if needed. Replace the Spectamax in a safe, easy-to-use area; most likely the lower-left hand side of the windshield.

Pay special attention to the crevices where the cushions meet. Vacuum the bottom and back of the seats. Check beneath seats for coins and garbage before vacuuming. Vacuum the floor of the car, including the area beneath the seats, still using the hose attachment. Vacuum the floor mats. When finished, give the mats a final shake to remove any remaining debris, then return them to the car. Clean all the windows using a window cleaner and balled-up newspaper or paper towels. Spray a small amount of car-interior or vinyl protectant on a towel. With the moistened towel, wipe the dashboard, door handles and all vinyl parts.

Exterior Washing:

You will Need

- Chamois Cloth
- Car Wash Mitt
- Car Wash Brush



- Car Wash Soap
- Garden Hoses
- Rags
- Large Sponge
- Large Bucket

Park the car in the shade. It is best if the car is cool. Close all doors and windows. Put one capful of car soap into a bucket and fill it 3/4 of the way with warm water. Set the bucket aside. Hose any excess dirt off the car, beginning at the roof and working down to the tires. Lather a sponge or terry cloth rag in the bucket of soapy water and sponge the roof of the car. Spray off excess soap when the entire roof has been cleaned. Repeat for all four sides of the car, washing one full side including windows, fenders and tires and rinsing completely before going to the next side. Remember soap dries fast, you want to rinse the car off before the soap has dried. Give the car one final rinse with the hose to get rid of any water spots when all four sides have been washed and rinsed. Take a chamois leather (slightly wet) or towel and dry the car thoroughly by setting the towel flat against the surface of the car and dragging it along the surface to pick up any water spots. Start at the roof and work your way down to the tires. Wash the windows with a rag soaked in plain water and dry them with a dry rag, or use window cleaner and pieces of balled-up newspaper on both the inside and the outside of the windows. Give any metal or chrome an extra rubdown to get rid of water spots.

Waxing the car

Your car's paint is constantly being attacked. Acid rain, intense UV rays, industrial fallout, bug splatter, bird droppings, brake dust and hard water mineral deposits are just some of the things that can attach to your cars paint and damage the finish. By applying a high quality car wax or polymer sealant on a regular basis, you are applying a sacrificial barrier that will offer protection from these elements and contaminants.

Wax is a generic term that has been used to describe products containing organic (also known as natural or carnauba) waxes as well as synthetic polymers (also



known as paint sealants). Organic wax is derived from the Brazilian Palm Tree, the "Carnauba Palm". Organic "carnauba" waxes come in both paste and in liquid form and provide a deep, wet-look gloss. Synthetic polymer waxes are most often found in liquid form and are known for their durability. Although Carnauba's are still the choice of show car enthusiasts, today's polymer waxes rival the finest carnaubas when it comes to appearance and will provide a more durable paint finish. For this reason, polymer sealants have become the "wax" of choice for enthusiasts who want or need the best possible durability AND the deep wet-look shine. For the remainder of this article the term "wax" will be used to describe both organic and synthetic waxes.

First off, follow the directions provided by the manufacturer on the container and for best results, use the least amount of product that you possibly can; many thin layers are better than one thick coat of wax. Since excess wax will be removed during the residue removal process. The more that you apply, the more that you will have to remove. Apply wax manually or by using a machine. While by hand allows you to get into tight crevices, the machine will allow you to cover large areas quickly.

For hand application, use a foam wax applicator pad. Do not moisten the pad with water, this can cause some waxes and polymers to become sticky, gooey and hard to remove. What you should do is apply a small amount of the wax to the pad to soften and moisten it. Apply the wax with long, straight overlapping passes. Do not apply in a circular motion, this could increase swirls in the paint; something the judges will grade you on.

When applying wax by machine, any standard polisher will work, just make sure you get comfortable with the variable speeds and features before use. As you did with the hand pad above, moisten the foam pad on the machine with just enough wax to soften the foam. Spread the wax in a small area before you turn the machine on. Only turn the machine on when the foam pad is in contact with the vehicle's paint. Use overlapping passes, first side to side and the front to back. This machine will help you to apply wax very thing and even.

Some waxes need to be applied and removed one panel at a time while others work



best if allowed to dry for a longer period of time. In general, carnauba waxes need to be applied and removed before moving on to the next section. If left to dry, they can get very hard and their residues are very hard to remove. If you run into this problem, reapplication of the car wax will soften the hardened wax, make sure to remove the residue immediately. Polymer waxes tend to work best and be easier to remove if allowed to dry for a longer period of time. The best way to remove the dried wax residues is by hand with thick, soft and plush high-pile microfiber towels. Using only high quality microfiber, take one in each hand and fold them over to increase the thickness of the towel. Remove the wax residue and buff and polish to reveal that freshly waxed shine.

How often should you wax?

Depends on the type of the car wax: synthetic or organic. Synthetic "polymer" wax lasts longer than organic "carnauba" wax. In general, carnauba wax lasts anywhere from 1 week to 4 months. Polymer waxes last from 1 month up to 1 year. It all depends on what the finish is exposed to, (i.e., exposure to the sun, how many times you wash the car, condition of the car's paint, was the surface smooth and clean and contaminant-free prior to application?

What the judges look for:

Take off the wheels and scrub down the wheel wells and get some satin or semi-black and spray the wells where appropriate. Judges often like to run their fingers under the wheel well (and the wheel well lip) to feel for dirt. Tape off areas like the front bumper support that is not the same material to keep the proper contrast. Tape off the body connectors also; looks better when they are not painted. Run a wet cloth of tire gel on them to brighten the rubber up. If the brake lines show tape these off and clean them and apply some sort of polish; it really makes the lines look good. While the wheels are off clean the back of the wheel too to reduce spreading dirt. If the brake calipers look bad, clean them and repaint with hi-temp special caliper paint. Remember to stick with the OEM colors for maximum scoring points. If you are entering a judged show make sure the lips of the wheel wells are cleaned if they decide to reach inside and feel for dirt/mud on the inside lips. Wash the



windshield wiper bay very thoroughly and paint it if need be with a semi gloss black (remove the wiper arms before hand). Replace the dirty windshield washer hose with some fresh hose. If you show your car with the hood up and have the motor cleaned up they will not even notice it if the wiper area is filthy. Clean out the gas cap area and treat the rubber with a protectorant. Clean the bugs out of the radiator when the hood is up. Nothing like a bunch of dead bugs in your grill to knock a few points off of your scoring. Replace missing hub covers, plastic plugs, lug nuts etc.

What to bring to the Car Show:

- Folding chairs
- Lunch
- Glass cleaner, quick-detailing touch up spray, newspapers, paper towels, interior vinyl/leather cleaning spray
- Your Spectamax
- A sign encased in a plastic frame that provides the details about your car
- Any accessories that proves the car is OEM (original window sticker laminated, laminated dealer receipt, etc.)
- Trophies you have won at past events

AND TO REALLY STAND OUT,

Ever been to a car show and the windshield is covered with permit stickers for the condo complex of the owner, beach permit, or perhaps police "get of jail free" association stickers? I have been involved with many concours events, and the judges always comments on how these stickers really break up the view of the car and take off a few points for this non-compliance with OEM. If you need to display (at times) stickers, you should consider the Spectamax, which is a small suction-cup mounted box that holds these stickers and allows you show the correct sticker at the correct time. For the show, you can remove the entire box and place it in the glove compartment. Read more at www.spectamax.com.