HOW TO
CLEAN A CAR
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WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- Hose pipe/pressure washer
- Bucket of warm water
- Car shampoo
- Sponge
- Cleaning cloths
- Chamois leather
- Microfibre cloths
- Trim cleaner
- Car polish
- Car wax
- Vacuum cleaner
- Window blade
- Gloves
- Alloy wheel brush
- Tyre dressing

HANDY TIPS

- Make sure to check the weather forecast as the last thing you want is heavy rain when your car is covered in polish or wax.
- Bird droppings can contain uric acid which is corrosive and capable of eating through wax and paint – so always clean it off as soon as you notice it.
- Cars don’t need to be polished that regularly, so plan for three to four times a year.
If possible, park your car out of direct sunlight, but not under a tree. Water drying in direct sunlight can leave marks, and trees can drop sap, leaves (and contain birds) – all of which can spoil your cleaning work.

Add some car shampoo (check the label for how much) to a bucket and fill it with warm water.

Drop in a sponge and give it a swoosh round.

Using a hose pipe or pressure washer, rinse the car down. Take the opportunity to remove tougher dirt from bumpers and door sills, as well as in the wheel arches, where dirt can really build up over time.

If you drop the sponge, wash thoroughly to make sure it hasn’t picked up any little stones or gravel that might scratch your paintwork.

From the top down, rinse the car of soapy solution, using less pressure than before.

Take the sponge, open the doors and wipe clean the door sills and frame. Repeat on the boot. Watch out for water drips. Then use the hose pipe/pressure washer to wash down any residual dirt.
Get a fresh bucket of clean water and soak a chamois leather or microfibre cloth. Wring it out and wipe the car down so there's very little water left.

Remember to wipe around door handles, wing mirrors and any air vents or ledges, like the recess for the rear number plate and boot release.

A window blade is a quick and efficient way to remove excess water from windows, before you start to chamois.

Not only does dirt and grime from the road build up on alloy wheels, but brake dust is also an issue. This combination can be harder to remove, so use an alloy wheel brush to get into those harder-to-reach areas.

Use the soapy water and sponge to give the alloys a thorough clean.

Remember that some areas you won’t be able to see, like the underside of a spoke. There’s nothing more frustrating than seeing what you’ve missed when you next move the car. So half way through the cleaning process, consider moving the car about a foot, so you get to see the entire alloy wheel and avoid missing any dirt.

Rinse off with water and then chamois to leave a clean, dry alloy wheel.

For polishing, use a microfibre cloth to initially rub a thin layer of polish across the paint surface.

Add a small amount of polish to the cloth and begin applying the polish to the paintwork, spreading equally across a small area at a time. Apply gently – a circular motion often works well. As it dries, it will create a haze.
Check whether the polish you’re using needs to be left for a short time before it’s ready to be removed.

Take a fresh microfibre cloth and start to buff off the polish, again using a soft and consistent action.

With the polish now removed, it’s time to seal and protect the paintwork with a layer of wax.

Using a fresh microfibre cloth, follow the same steps as you used for applying the polish.

Check the instructions on the wax bottle to see how long it needs to be on the car before starting to remove. Using a fresh microfibre cloth, buff off the wax.

If it’s been a while since your car was last waxed, it’s worth considering a second coat for added protection. You can also wax your alloy wheels, giving them a layer of protection against dirt and brake dust.

It’s essential to make sure the area around the car is dry if you’re going to use a vacuum cleaner that’s plugged into the mains.

To get things going, take out all car mats, collect and dispose of any rubbish into a bin, and store any personal items safely.
For a plastic dashboard and interior trim, spray a suitable interior car cleaner onto a microfibre cloth, and wipe evenly across the surfaces. Depending on the cleaner you use, it may also need to be wiped off – so check first. Avoid the steering wheel, as a cleaner could make it slippery. For leather seats and surfaces, as well as fabric seats, follow the instructions on the cleaner.

Vacuum around the seats, remembering to slide them back and forward to get more access to those harderto-reach spots. If you have any clip-on tools, you can get down the side of the seats and in the seat crevices. When vacuuming the boot, you could also lower the rear seats if the backrests are dirty.

For rubber mats, give them a wash using a sponge and rinse off, leaving to dry before returning to the car. For fabric car mats, vacuum these outside of the car, as it’s easier this way. You can wash them as well, but they’ll take some time to dry. This works well with a pressure washer, but check the mats first for any cleaning instructions.
To give your car that showroom look, apply a tyre dressing for a shiny new tyre appearance. It’s best to spray onto a rag and wipe over the surface of the tyre. Only use on the tyre wall, and not on the treads.