

CAR CARE

Cars can keep healthy look

A bond that exists between some car owners and their cars is based largely on appearance.

Car buffs love spending time and money on their cars' "looks." They don't seem to mind the hours of back-breaking work involved in a perfect wash and wax job.

New cars, of course, don't need a lot of help. But preventative care should start when the romance begins.

"Shiny and new" is often the way a just-off-the-lot car is described. Washing a car often is one way to keep it looking shiny, and that isn't a chore anymore, thanks to the full- and self-service car wash businesses and to weekend fund-raisers.

A good wax job will keep a car looking new. Wax, which protects a clean surface, is a combination of cleaner and wax, serving to clean the car's surface, enhance its appearance and protect the finish.

A good car wax should uniformly clean away the soils and stains on the surface and smooth and flatten rough spots. The polishing agents help to smooth out the surface and remove oxidized paint, dissolve and polish

away road film, stains and chalked surface material. The result is an appearance that is more uniform, with a higher gloss and brighter color. The wax also provides a thin film over the surface, which makes it water-repellant. Not only aesthetically pleasing, it provides protective value to paint surfaces.

How to protect something from the elements that basically belongs outside is a true paradox. Weather damage and paw prints of wandering felines haunt most car owners.

The garage, of course, is a car's best friend. If you still open your garage door by hand, you might consider garage door openers mere luxuries. But those who own them know better. At the touch of a button on your hand-held transmitter, you can raise the door and turn on a light, and reverse the process with equal ease.

The codes used to operate garage door openers include hundreds of combinations, and models are priced from \$100 to \$225.

A fan-shaped or cardboard shield can be placed on a dashboard to

shelter them from the sun's rays.

What about the inside? Auto supply stores have cleaners for cloth, vinyl and leather upholstery, and those products are preferable to soap and water.

Stains should be cleaned immediately before they get a chance to set.

Upholstery and carpeting should be cleaned with a vacuum to keep dirt from being ground into the fibers. This is done at full-service car washes or at home with a vacuum hose attachment.

Floor mats should be used to protect the carpet from tracked-in mud and grease stains, and the mats should be washed frequently.

In a relationship where looks are so important, it's handy to know about body shops. A few bumps and scratches, maybe even a dent or two, or even an out-of-date color can be easily fixed with the help of a body shop professional.

Smaller nicks can be taken care of by the owner with a little touch-up paint, keeping in mind that no paint

will adhere to a dirty or rusted surface.

To check the color match of any touch-up paint, brush a small amount inside a door jam. Dab on the paint and let it run into the scratch.

For a large rust repair, sand down to the bare metal using a fine grade of sandpaper. For a small scratch with some rust present, try to chip off the rust with the edge of a razor blade.

On a larger rust repair, the first coat of paint should always be a primer. This protects against further rust and gives a smooth surface for the final coat of paint.

Let the renewed finish set before using a rubbing compound to blend in the new paint with the rest of the finish. Finally, give the car a good coat of wax.

A car's beauty doesn't have to fade with time. With care, a car can age gracefully.

Tailor trips to children's needs

Taking the whole family along on a motoring vacation can be fun if the trip is well planned.

There are three basic rules for traveling with children: keep them safe, keep them occupied and tailor the miles traveled and stops to their eating and sleeping habits.

Make sure that each child has the proper passenger restraint for

their age and size, and that it is used whenever the child is in the vehicle.

Take plenty of favorite toys, and reserve a surprise or two for when the trip's novelty begins to wear off. Involve older children with the navigation or the keeping of the mileage or expense records.



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Tire design safer than ever

Copley News Service

Modern tire design and construction, coupled with proper installation and maintenance, make driving safer and more economical than ever before.

Computer, lasers and holography are used with new man-made materials to produce tires that last longer, grip the road better under most weather conditions and are more resistant to damage from road hazards, according to Alan Bennett, vice president of marketing for Armstrong Tire Co. of New Haven, Conn.

"But improper use and maintenance cause tires to lose many of the benefits that we've built into them," he says.

"Because of the technology involved in modern tires, especially radial tires, they require more care than those simpler versions we made 25 years ago."

Tread designs have evolved to offer special features for driving on wet or snow-covered roads, carrying heavy loads, driving off-road or in high-performance situations.

But no amount of testing or research can really protect drivers when they abuse their tires or fail to maintain them properly, Bennett says.

Drivers should check tire pressure, to make certain it conforms to manufacturer's recommendations, at least once a week and prior to any long drive.

"Improper inflation is the single, most frequent cause of premature tire failure and increased tread wear," he said.

Tread depth should also be monitored closely, especially for signs of uneven wear that could indicate failing brakes or suspension systems or misaligned wheels.

"In a properly maintained car, and if tires are not over- or under-inflated, tread should always wear evenly," says Bennett. "And if you can see the wear markers we mold into the tread, it's time to replace your tires."

The tread-wear markers run across the tire tread and, when they are visible, they indicate tread has worn dangerously.



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