

6.1 Effective Wheel Cleaning



Keeping wheels clean is an on-going battle, as inevitably they collect an enormous amount of road grime, tar and harmful brake dust. The temptation may be to use a caustic wheel cleaner to remove these contaminants quickly, but using strong chemicals is very likely to degrade the surface over time and if left for too long on the wheel during the cleaning process will compromise the lacquer and eventually cause it to peel – requiring a complete and expensive wheel refurbishment!

The key to keeping wheels in pristine condition is to clean them regularly to avoid the need for strong cleaners. Using a pH-balanced wheel cleaner is ideal although their lack of bite will mean contaminants that have been allowed to bake on to the wheel will require agitation with a brush in order to dislodge them. Cleaners with a slight alkaline or acid bias will remove these trouble spots more easily. Some wheel cleaners have a colour-change function which helps to see that it is working. If contamination is particularly evident or after a long drive where the brakes have been used extensively, it may be necessary to use an Iron Contamination or Fallout Remover (refer to 1.1 Safe Removal of Metal Particles).

Never clean wheels whilst they are hot! It is extremely important to ensure wheels are cool to the touch before beginning the cleaning process. Any wheel cleaner will evaporate if sprayed on to a hot wheel. Even worse, if the cleaner has an alkaline or acid-base, the reaction between the chemicals in the cleaner and the heat of the wheel could cause permanent etching in the lacquer.

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Equipment:

- Wheel cleaner in a bottle with a trigger spray head
- Soft wheel brush or microfibre wash mitt
- Soft drying towel

Method:

- Step 1 – Ensure wheels are cool to the touch
- Step 2 – Spray wheel cleaner on to the face of the wheel
- Step 3 – Using a wash mitt or a soft wheel brush (refer to 6.3. - Safe Wheel Brushes) work the wheel cleaner into the corners where the spokes meet the inner and outer edges of the wheel where brake dust and road grime collect. If your wheel cleaner has a colour-change function you will see it working
- Step 4 – Rinse thoroughly with cool water using a hose or pressure washer until all the wheel cleaner residue is removed
- Step 5 – Using a soft, clean drying towel dry the wheel taking care not to allow the cloth to touch the ground (where it may pick up grit and scratch the wheel as you're drying it)