



How to remove scratches and swirls

Scratches, swirls, scuff marks and holograms—while they go by many names, the end result is that they make your car look dull, dated and old.

Most owners think of scratches as automotive wrinkles: an inevitable part of their car's aging process. But with recent advancements in paint care technologies, it's now safe and easy for anyone to dramatically improve their car's appearance.

What you'll need:

- Soft foam applicator pad
- Clean 100% cotton terry towel
- Premium microfiber towel
- Premium scratch remover
- Scratch compound
- Premium polish
- Premium durable, water-repellent wax
- Carnauba wax

Scratches, swirls and scuff marks

Scratches, swirls, holograms, spider webs and towel marks are all below-surface defects, meaning that something has removed a small amount of paint material or film.

Swirls: Also referred to as holograms, spider webs or towel marks, these terms describe the shallowest type of scratch possible. Typically, these defects just lightly mar the surface of the paint or clear coat enough to dull the reflection and add circular lines around reflections of the sun.

Scratches: Generally deeper than swirls, scratches can be removed so long as you can't feel the scratch with your fingernail. If you are able to feel the scratch, you might need a professional to correct it.

Scuff marks: These occur when something like a pole, garage opening or another car rubs against your car at a specific point, like along your bumper. Scuffs often transfer some paint color to your car.

Steps for removing defects

There are several safe and easy ways that you can use to remove these defects on your own. Follow these steps, and then choose the right solution for your needs:

Step 1: Start with a clean surface.

Clean your vehicle with a quality wash made specifically for cars. Dish-washing detergents are very harsh and can actually dry out your car's paint, leading to oxidation and premature aging.

Step 2: Remove any above-surface contaminants.

Use a clay bar to remove anything that sticks to your paint after you finish washing your car.

Step 3: Determine the severity of the defect.

Using the following chart, identify the defect, and then select the appropriate product to correct the condition:

| Defect/Condition | Recommended product |
|--|--|
| Paint is generally clear and reflective, with just an isolated scratch, blemish or scuff mark. | Since you are trying to correct a defined area, a scratch remover is a good choice here, as you will only be working on the targeted area. |
| Swirls, holograms or light towel marks. (Look for multiple fine, circular marks that ring the sun's reflection in your paint.) | Light swirls and scratches are best managed with a polish instead of a compound. Polish tends to be less aggressive than compounds and will leave a bright polished finish. You can apply polish by hand or with a polishing tool. |
| Heavier scratches, oxidation, stains, water spots and blemishes. Long, straight marks from automatic car wash brushes. | This type of defect will require a compound in order to effectively remove the scratches and oxidation. Compound can be applied by hand or with a polishing tool. Once the compound step is completed, the finish should be evaluated, and you can decide if you want to then apply a polish to achieve an even more brilliant finish. |

What to do if you have clear coat

There are a variety of products that are marked as safe for clear coats. Before purchasing, check the label to be sure you're buying products that are safe on all paint finishes, including clear coats.

Step 4: Apply the appropriate product as directed.

Now that you've identified the type of defect and selected the appropriate product, simply follow the directions on the label. These four tips will also help you correctly apply any of the products mentioned in step 3:

1. Work one 2' x 2' section at a time, making 3–5 medium-pressure passes.
2. Apply and remove product using a soft foam applicator pad or a clean, high-quality microfiber towel.
3. Unlike waxes, compounds and polishes do not require the product to dry before removing. In fact, it's easier to work on small sections and wipe the surface clean *before* the compound or polish dries. If the product does dry, it will not cause any damage; it just makes removal more difficult. Erring on the side of using a little more product than necessary will make removal easier.

Step 5: Protect.

The last step is to protect that killer finish with a high-quality wax. Not sure which type to use? Read [How to wax your car](#) for information on choosing and applying wax.

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