FIELD-TESTED · NO SPIN · NO GURUS

THE PRO DETAILING TOOLBOX

The exact products and gear I reach for, the dilutions I run them at, and the honest take on each — built from 16 years on the tools.

18 PRODUCTS · 9 TOOLS · MASTER DILUTION CHART

CONTENTS

TAP AN ITEM TO JUMP →

WASH & DRY

- Meguiar's Hyper Wash 2
- Optimum No Rinse 3
- Formula 4 Spray Wax 4

WHEELS, TIRES & WHEEL WELLS

- Dark Fury 5
- Nano Skin Speedy Brite 6
- Stoner More Shine 7
- Chemical Guys VRP 8
- Super Clean 9

PAINT — DECON & PROTECTION

- Meguiar's Synthetic X-Press 10
- Citrol 11
- Rapid Remover 12

INTERIOR & GLASS

- Meguiar's APC 13
- P&S Interior X-Press 14
- Isopropyl Alcohol 15

CARPET, UPHOLSTERY & HEADLINER

- DS2 Carpet Shampoo 16
- P&S Carpet System 17
- Encap Spot Clean 18

DRESSINGS & TRIM

- Solution Finish 19

TOOLS

- Spray Bottles 20
- Paint Decon 21
- Car Washing 22
- Steamers 23
- Exterior Brushes & Mitts 24
- Extractors 25
- Interior Brushes & Scrub Pads 26
- Microfiber Towels 27
- Vacuum 28

REFERENCE

- Master Dilution Chart 29

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CAR WASH SOAP

MEGUIAR'S HYPER WASH

Detailer Series · Hyper-Wash (D110)

Just car soap — nothing added, and that's the point. Soap is meant to **clean**; this part of detailing should be simple. Extremely dilutable, which makes it one of the cheapest washes per bucket you'll find.

BEST FOR

FOAM CANNON · BUCKET WASH · EXTERIOR · MAINTENANCE WASH

DILUTION

EXTERIOR / WASH	
400:1	Standard
300:1	Heavier soil / more cleaning power
Eyeball	Pour from the gallon into a 5-gal bucket

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- Professionally, the **simple option is the best option**. Soap is meant to clean — you don't need anything fancy. This part of detailing should be simple.
- Works in both a **foam cannon** and a traditional bucket wash.
- **Very cost-effective** thanks to its extreme dilutability — a single gallon lasts a long time.
- I don't measure 400:1 exactly — I **eyeball it**, pouring straight from the gallon into a 5-gallon bucket.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →

NO ALTERNATIVE LISTED
I don't overcomplicate car soap — keep it simple, most anything will do.

RINSELESS WASH

OPTIMUM NO RINSE

> The best rinseless wash I've ever used — and my go-to for washing in **direct sun**, where a traditional soap-and-rinse job would flash-dry and spot. One bottle covers washing, clay lube, and quick detailing.

BEST FOR

RINSELESS WASH · QUICK DETAILER · CLAY LUBE · GLASS · FINAL TOUCH

DILUTION

INTERIOR / SPRAY	
32:1	**Standard**
~Cap	1 capful / 32 oz bottle
EXTERIOR / WASH	
128:1	**Standard (rinseless)**
~Cap	1 capful / gallon bucket
32:1	Glass / final touch / quick detailer / clay lube

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- Don't overthink the ratios — I **eyeball it**. A capful per **32 oz** spray bottle for detailing, a capful per **gallon** in a bucket for rinseless washing.
- Great for **washing in direct sun**. Use 1 gallon of distilled water mixed with 1 capful of ONR — no water spotting.
- Off-label, it doubles as a **clay lubricant** and **quick detailer**, and handles interior/exterior glass plus light cleaning of plastics, rubber, vinyl, leather, and nav screens.
- There's little to no difference between the **blue** or **green** version. Green is a wash and wax; blue is a wash and shine.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT → **ABSOLUTE RINSELESS WASH**
A solid rinseless alternative if ONR isn't available.

SHEETING CONCENTRATE · DRYING AID

FORMULA 4 SPRAY WAX

Superior Products · Concentrated Spray Wax (C84-1)

One of the best detailing chemicals ever made. It's the final chemical automatic car washes spray on as the car exits — water beads up on the paint, and the blowers strip it right off. Best used as a **"rinsing aid"** when washing in direct sun, to keep water spots from forming.

BEST FOR

DIRECT SUN WASHING · DRYING AID · RINSING AID

DILUTION

EXTERIOR / PAINT	
10:1	Standard
5:1	Really hot / dark paint

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

★ BEST PRICE · IN-STORE AT O'REILLY
Cheapest and easiest over the counter. Ask for **Superior Products F4 (C84-1)**.

PRO NOTES

- I call this a **"chemical DI tank"** because it extends your washing time in direct sun — water beads off instead of flash-drying into spots.
- A **pump sprayer** works best for a continuous spray, but a regular spray-trigger bottle is fine too.
- Designed to be used **after you've rinsed the soap off** and before drying. If you're a mobile detailer in a rush, you can also spray it onto a soapy car in direct sun — it'll give you more time to keep washing before you have to rinse.
- Won't inhibit **100% of water spots**, but it keeps water from drying on the paint quickly enough that you can usually outrun them.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →

EZ BEADS BY AUTO MAGIC

EZ Beads is sold through distributor only — built for commercial automatic car washes. No retail alternative is needed: Formula 4 itself is available on Amazon or over the counter at O'Reilly.

ALKALINE WHEEL & ALL-PURPOSE EXTERIOR CLEANER

DARK FURY

Superior Products · Exterior Wheel & Bug Cleaner (C66)

The best alkaline wheel cleaner I've ever used — and the product I use as an **all-purpose exterior cleaner**. Acid-level power, so it cleans wheels, tires, wells, bugs, and rocker panels with little to no scrubbing if need be.

BEST FOR

- WHEELS
- TIRES & WELLS
- BUGS
- ROCKER PANELS
- ALL-PURPOSE EXTERIOR

DILUTION

EXTERIOR	
10:1	**My standard — wheels, tires, wells & general use**
4:1	Heavy brake dust (don't exceed)
20:1	Painted surfaces (safe start)

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

★ BEST PRICE · IN-STORE AT O'REILLY
Cheapest and easiest over the counter. Ask for **Superior Products Dark Fury (C66)**.

PRO NOTES

- **4:1 is best for heavy dirt** on wheels, tires, and wells — the manufacturer's max, so don't go stronger. **10:1** covers that plus general use: engines, random grime, all-purpose exterior.
- **On painted surfaces, start at 20:1.** On older or degraded clear coat, a cleaner this strong can leave a faint "ghost" halo where it sat — I've never had it happen, but diluting heavier removes the risk.
- Safe on clear coats, painted steel, and plastic — I let it sit on a painted test panel in the sun for 24 hours and it left no staining. **Avoid uncoated polished aluminum.**

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →
MEGUIAR'S WHEEL & TIRE CLEANER
Significantly weaker than Dark Fury as an alkaline wheel cleaner.

ORGANIC ACID WHEEL & TIRE CLEANER

NANO SKIN SPEEDY BRITE

Organic Wheel & Tire Acid · Low-pH

The acid wheel cleaner I'll actually use. A **low-pH organic acid** — no hydrochloric or hydrofluoric, no fuming, barely a scent — so you get acid-level brake-dust power without the health trade-off that keeps me off most acids.

BEST FOR

- HEAVY BRAKE DUST
- INNER BARRELS
- WATER SPOTS
- ROAD SALT
- ACID PRE-WASH

DILUTION

EXTERIOR	
4:1	**Wheels & rims**
32:1	Water spot remover (easy spray-bottle mix)
50:1	Paint & glass acid pre-wash in a foam cannon (40–60:1)
99:1	General vehicle wash (label)

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- **4:1 in a foam sprayer** is the move for wheels — foaming it makes the acid cling to the inner barrel and dwell, where a liquid trigger just runs off. With no agitation I get ~85% of inner-barrel brake dust off; a quick brush finishes it.
- **Safe on glass** — rare for an acid. At ~50:1 it works as an acid pre-wash that strips road salt, grime, and water spots off paint and glass.
- At **32:1** this is my **water spot remover** for paint and glass — better than any dedicated water-spot product, which are notoriously miserable to use.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →

NO ALTERNATIVE LISTED
There's no other acid-specific wheel cleaner I can safely recommend for these applications.

AEROSOL TIRE SHINE

STONER MORE SHINE

Tire Dressing · Ready-to-Use Aerosol

My go-to **aerosol tire dressing**. The spray-can delivery is the whole reason to keep it — it coats heavily treaded tires evenly in a way you can't match dressing by hand. Spray on, walk away.

BEST FOR

- TIRES
- WHEEL WELLS
- ENGINES
- BLACK TRIM
- DOOR JAMBS

DILUTION

READY TO USE

Aerosol — no dilution. Spray on, walk away.

WHERE TO BUY

CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- It's an **aerosol**, so it sprays on evenly — perfect for **heavily treaded tires** that can't be dressed by hand. Every detailer should have a can.
- I always dress tires with this **before** waxing or sealing the paint — it leaves freckles of overspray that wipe right off when you apply your finishing sealant.
- Also great for a **quick spray** on door jambs that still look rough after cleaning, plus wheel wells, engines, and exterior black trim.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →

SUPERIOR COVER ALL TIRE SHINE

High-gloss aerosol tire shine & dressing — same spray-on convenience in the Superior Products line.

DRESSING · TIRES, TRIM & ENGINES

CHEMICAL GUYS VRP

Vinyl, Rubber & Plastic Dressing

> Not the highest-quality dressing on the market — but its **dilutability** makes it the perfect one to use where you go through a lot of product: tires, wheel wells, and engines that drink it up.

BEST FOR

TIRES · WHEEL WELLS · ENGINES · INTERIOR TRIM

DILUTION

EXTERIOR	
5:1	**Standard — wheel wells & engines**
Full	Dressing tires by hand (gel form)

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- I keep **two versions** on hand: a 5:1 dilution in a spray bottle, and full-strength in a squeeze bottle — undiluted it's a **gel**, so the squeeze bottle controls it.
- Use **5:1** to dress wheel wells and engines, where you go through a lot of dressing and want a workhorse you're not precious about.
- I reserve it for the **high-volume areas** — not the show-surface dressing where finish quality matters most.
- For **interior** plastics, vinyl, and rubber, use **5:1** — though I tend to avoid it inside, since it can leave a greasy feel.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →

MEGUIAR'S HYPER DRESSING
A highly dilutable dressing concentrate that fills the same workhorse role.

HEAVY-DUTY DEGREASER

SUPER CLEAN

All-Purpose Cleaner-Degreaser

The **"cheap" degreaser** every detailer needs — the one you use as much as you want without thinking about cost. Strong stuff: I run it at **5:1** on tires, wheel wells, and engines, but generally avoid it on paint.

BEST FOR

- TIRES
- WHEEL WELLS
- ENGINES
- GENERAL DEGREASER/CLEANER

DILUTION

EXTERIOR	
5:1	Strong — tires, wheel wells & engines
10:1	**Standard**
20:1	Older cars / oxidized paint
100:1	Foam cannon / wash solution

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- This is the **cheap product every detailer needs** — buy it so you can use as much as you want without thinking about it. Cheapest option in the store.
- It's a **strong degreaser**, so use caution on paint. I run it at **5:1** on tires, wheel wells, and engines regularly, but back off near painted surfaces.
- I generally **don't use it on paint** — drop to **20:1** for anything paint-related.
- Watch for **overspray on paint** when you're using it on tires and wheel wells.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →

MEGUIAR'S SUPER DEGREASER
A comparable heavy-duty degreaser if Super Clean isn't on the shelf — not nearly as cheap, though.

SPRAY WAX · PAINT PROTECTION

MEGUIAR'S SYNTHETIC X-PRESS

Synthetic Express Spray Wax (D156)

One of the most **versatile products** a detailer can own. A spray wax that seals hot paint in direct sun and protects for roughly 3–9 weeks — then doubles for a dozen off-label jobs on basically any surface of the car that isn't fabric/upholstery.

BEST FOR

- PAINT
- GLASS
- EXTERIOR PLASTICS/RUBBERS
- WHEELS
- INTERIOR PLASTICS/LEATHERS/VINYL

DILUTION

READY TO USE

No dilution. Spray on, wipe off.

WHERE TO BUY →

CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES

PRO NOTES

- I use it to **seal paint in direct sun** — where a traditional wax or sealant would struggle. Protection runs roughly **3–9 weeks** in most scenarios.
- The off-label uses are why it earns a permanent shelf spot: **interior plastics, glass, leather, vinyl/rubber**, and anything that isn't fabric/upholstery.
- Think of it as an **all-purpose protection**. Quickly seal and shine all exterior surfaces in direct sun without a separate product to finish glass, plastics, etc. — and a fantastic final wipe/protectant for interior door panels, leather seats, dash, and more.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →

TECHNICIAN'S CHOICE

A comparable spray wax / quick-protection product in the same role.

TAR, BUG & SAP REMOVER

CITROL

Citrus Tar Remover

The **best tar remover on the planet** — often a touchless one. Spray it on road tar and watch it melt off the paint. Doubles as a last-minute bug and sap remover for the stubborn stuff nothing else will lift.

BEST FOR

- ROAD TAR
- TREE SAP
- STUCK-ON BUGS
- CLEAR-COATED PAINT & GLASS

DILUTION

EXTERIOR	
Full	**Spot-cleaning specific areas**
5:1	Spray-bottle mix for sap-covered cars (cool paint only)

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- **Best tar remover I've used** — often touchless. The **aerosol can** is the move here: spray it straight onto the paint and watch hard, stuck-on tar melt right off with no scrubbing.
- The **gallon** is for precision — dab a little onto a microfiber and spot-clean stuck-on bugs, specific sap on paint or glass, and similar one-off messes.
- **Mixed with water (~5:1)** it becomes sprayable enough to coat an entire sap-covered car. It **doesn't truly mix with water**, but it lets you apply it everywhere — **only on cool paint**. Let it sit, then watch how much easier it is to clean a sap-covered car that's been sitting under trees for years. This chemical is the secret.
- Safe on **intact clear coat**, but it's a strong chemical — always use with caution, and **remove residue with a rinseless wash**.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT → **STONER TARMINATOR**
A widely available tar & adhesive remover if Citrol isn't on hand.

ADHESIVE & RESIDUE REMOVER

RAPID REMOVER

Adhesive Remover

The **best adhesive remover I've ever used** — Goo Gone on steroids. Strips decals, badges, and sticker residue off paint and glass, and doubles as a fantastic treatment for **greasy, oily stains**.

BEST FOR

- ADHESIVE RESIDUE
- DECALS & BADGES
- GLASS
- OILY CARPET STAINS

DILUTION

NO DILUTION

Use straight. Strong fumes — ventilate.

WHERE TO BUY

CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- Safe on **all clear-coated surfaces and glass** — but I don't use it on plastics or leather.
- Think of it as the **"sticky stuff remover."** Doesn't matter what it is — sticker residue, decal residue, random unidentified sticky gunk — it'll pull it off.
- Great **off-label stain pre-treatment** if you're dealing with an oily, sticky stain in carpet and plan to fully rinse the floor mats — its adhesive-removing properties break that type of stain up well.
- **Fumes are strong** — wear a mask or work in a well-ventilated area. After using on paint or glass, **remove residue with a rinseless wash**.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →

GOO GONE AUTOMOTIVE

The widely available adhesive remover — Rapid Remover is the stronger pro-grade step up.

ALL-PURPOSE CLEANER

MEGUIAR'S APC

Detailer Series · All Purpose Cleaner (D101)

The workhorse of the kit. It cleans every surface in the car **except glass** — you just change the dilution to match what you're touching. One of the cheapest cost-per-use cleaners you'll own.

BEST FOR

PLASTICS · LEATHERS · VINYL · RUBBER

DILUTION

INTERIOR	
10:1	**Standard**
15:1	Older cars / fragile areas
20:1	Light cleaning / dusting
EXTERIOR	
10:1	**Standard**
>10:1	Painted surfaces
5:1	Plastics / non-painted
Full	Tires & engine

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- One of the most cost-effective cleaners you'll own for interiors. Always dilute heavier — **20:1** — on anything damaged, weathered, old, or dark (i.e. dark & faded plastic interior door panels on an old BMW).
- Watch for the **white chalky residue** it can leave on old or dark plastics and leather. It also appears on the red seatbelt buckle. Dilute heavier when you're nervous, or reach for P&S Interior X-Press Cleaner as a substitute.
- Lives at **10:1** for most jobs, and it's safe on everything but glass.
- Can be used for carpets and upholstery, but **not great for heavily soiled or stained fabrics.** Best for general maintenance cleaning on any carpet or fabric surface.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →

P&S INTERIOR X-PRESS CLEANER
A gentler/safer alternative for delicate, old, or high-end interiors.

INTERIOR CLEANER

P&S INTERIOR X-PRESS

A safer alternative to most all-purpose cleaners

> Think of it as a **safer APC**. It does everything an all-purpose cleaner does on the inside of a car, but it's far gentler on older, darker, weathered surfaces — so it's what I reach for on delicate or high-end interiors. Some detailers **only** use this product — it's plenty effective with very little risk.

BEST FOR

PLASTICS · LEATHER · VINYL · RUBBER · LIGHT CARPET/UPHOLSTERY CLEANING

DILUTION

INTERIOR	
1:1	Standard
4:1	Older / darker / weathered

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- Think of it as a **safer APC** — the same interior versatility, much gentler on old, dark, weathered, and even **cracked-leather** surfaces. Very, very safe.
- Seriously — there's **no point in using a dedicated leather cleaner** if you have this product. It replaces all of them.
- Reach for this **over APC** any time you're nervous about a delicate or high-end interior.
- I don't use this on **exteriors** — not because you can't, but because I cover exteriors more effectively with other products. This is a **true interior product**.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →

MEGUIAR'S APC
The everyday workhorse — X-Press is the gentler, safer counterpart for delicate interiors.

GLASS CLEANING

ISOPROPYL ALCOHOL

The glass cleaning step — not the final wipe

I split glass into two steps — **cleaning, then finishing** — and alcohol owns the cleaning step. Cut 50/50 with distilled water, it pulls fingerprints and evaporated solvent off glass better than anything else. For tinted windows, dilute it 5:1 — or swap to the alternative listed below.

BEST FOR

GLASS · FINGERPRINTS · SOLVENT RESIDUE · FOGGY GLASS

DILUTION

GLASS	
1:1	**Standard — 50/50 distilled water**
4:1	Gentler / sensitive jobs

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- Glass is a **two-step job**: alcohol cleans, then a dedicated glass cleaner finishes. Alcohol lifts fingerprints and evaporated solvent off glass better than any standard cleaner.
- Always cut it with **distilled water**, never tap — tap minerals leave their own spots on glass and defeat the point.
- Switch to **Stoner Invisible Glass** (tint-safe) for any tinted window.
- I only use this on **interior glass**. For especially thick fog on the inner windshield, spray it on then wipe around with a **wet magic eraser**. Use a **waffle-weave towel** kept exclusively for glass — nothing else.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →

STONER INVISIBLE GLASS
Ready-to-use glass cleaner — and the tint-safe pick for tinted windows.

CARPET SHAMPOO

DS2 CARPET SHAMPOO

Deep carpet cleaning & extraction

One of the most effective carpet cleaners I've used — I borrowed it from the professional carpet-cleaning world. This is what I pull out for **really dirty carpets and extraction** work, where a little goes a long way.

BEST FOR

CARPETS · UPHOLSTERY · SEATS · FABRIC

DILUTION

CARPET	
32:1	Standard
15:1	Dirty carpets

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- You can run **1 ounce per spray bottle** — crazy dilution. It's the definition of a **true professional carpet-cleaning chemical**, engineered with all the surfactants and wicking-prevention components a detailer needs.
- My go-to for **really dirty carpets and extraction**.
- The **residue crystallizes as it dries**, so any leftover product vacuums right back up — no sticky film left behind.
- **Not sold on Amazon** — it comes straight from the manufacturer (the Where-to-Buy link routes you there).

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT → **NO ALTERNATIVE LISTED**

CARPET SYSTEM

P&S CARPET SYSTEM

3-part system · enzyme + carpet bomber + peroxide

The one carpet system a detailer **has to have** — three chemicals that work together to deep-clean carpet, upholstery, and fabric far better than any all-in-one cleaner.

BEST FOR

CARPET · UPHOLSTERY · FABRIC · HEAVY SOIL

DILUTION

CARPET BOMBER	the only dilutable part
5:1	**Standard**
3:1	Heavier cleaning
10:1	Less dirty carpets

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- I prefer a **dedicated carpet cleaner** for upholstery and fabric — APCs can work, but they don't perform at this level. My basic process for the 3-tier system:
  1. Spray the **enzyme cleaner** directly on the carpet and work it in with a carpet brush.
  2. Spray **Carpet Bomber (5:1)** over the pre-treated area. Steam, scrub, then mop up with a dry microfiber.
  3. Repeat 1–2 as needed, then spray the **peroxide finisher** on the area and walk away.
- An **amazing system with a steamer** — extremely effective. Spray, steam, and mop up with a dry towel; or wrap a towel around the steamer head to scrub and dry at the same time. Often **more effective than an extractor**.
- **Only Carpet Bomber dilutes** — 5:1 is the standard; drop to 3:1 only if you want it even stronger.
- These chemicals **naturally resist 'wicking'** — stains don't ghost back as the carpet dries. Part of why I suggest dedicated carpet cleaners over all-purpose cleaners for this.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT → **DS2 ENCAP CLEAN**
A highly dilutable, industrial-strength carpet-cleaning product.

HEADLINER CLEANER

ENCAP SPOT CLEAN

Ready to use · the headliner pick

The one product I trust on a **headliner**. It's ready to use and it resists wicking, so you can clean and blot the headliner dry without leaving rings or water stains behind.

BEST FOR

HEADLINER · SPOT CLEANING · UPHOLSTERY · FABRIC

DILUTION

READY TO USE

No dilution needed

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- **Method:** work a 2–3 inch circle of product into a microfiber, scrub the headliner, then mop it up with a dry side of the towel.
- **Naturally avoids 'wicking'** in the headliner, so no rings or water stains show up as it dries.
- For more power, run it in a **foaming pump bottle**; for extreme cleaning, load a 32 oz spray bottle and spray it directly onto the headliner.
- **Headliners are tricky** — half the battle is constantly blotting treated areas dry with a fresh, dry side of the towel. I run **two towels**: one for applying the Encap Spot Clean, a second just for drying.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT → **NO ALTERNATIVE LISTED**

TRIM RESTORER

SOLUTION FINISH

Restores faded black plastic trim

> The best and easiest black-trim restorer I've used. It brings faded, chalky black plastic back to a deep, even black — and unlike a dressing, it's a **true dye**, not a coating that flashes off in a month.

BEST FOR

- FADED BLACK TRIM
- POROUS TRIM
- PLASTIC
- RUBBER
- VINYL

DILUTION

NO DILUTION

Restores on contact

WHERE TO BUY
CLICK HERE TO COMPARE PRICES →

PRO NOTES

- Works **best on porous trim** — that's where it bites in deepest and the restoration lasts longest.
- It's a **true dye**, not a dressing, so it won't wash away or rub off. It will slowly fade in the sun over the long haul — just like the trim did originally — but re-applying is so fast and painless you won't care.
- **How to apply:** dab some onto a microfiber or applicator, wipe it on, then wipe off with a dry or slightly damp microfiber. That's it.
- **No need to tape off.** It wipes cleanly off paint and glass, so overspray and slips aren't a problem.
- Also great for **covering damage** on interior plastics, rubber, and vinyl — think a chemical burn or a faded door panel.

MOST COMPARABLE PRODUCT →

CERAKOTE

Solution Finish is the simpler, near-impossible-to-mess-up option. Cerakote lasts longer and looks shinier, but it's easier to botch and can leave streaks.

DETAILING TOOLS

SPRAY BOTTLES

Triggers & bottles

There's **no perfect sprayer** and no perfect bottle — don't waste years hunting for one like I did. The whole game is finding something **reasonably durable and cheap**, then buying spares so a failed trigger never slows you down.

WHAT I BUY

Spray Triggers

THE PART THAT NEEDS REPLACING

The only part of a spray bottle that actually fails. I gave up looking for one that lasts forever — the right trigger sits at the intersection of **cheap enough** and **durable enough** to justify the cost. I buy these in bulk and keep **10–20 spares** in the cabinet at all times.

BUY →

Spray Bottles

BUY ONCE

The easiest purchase you'll make. The bottle is just the bottle — it doesn't break and rarely needs replacing.

BUY →

PRO TIP

Acidic cleaners — **wheel cleaners especially** — corrode the inside of a trigger faster than anything else. To make one last: pull the trigger off the bottle, drop the pickup tube into **clean water**, and pump it through until it runs clear. That flushes the acid out of the spray head before it can eat the mechanism. Do it after every session with a corrosive product, and keep a few spares on hand regardless.

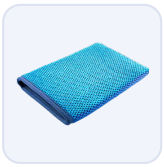
DETAILING TOOLS

PAINT DECON

Clay mitt vs. clay bar

The **clay mitt** is what I reach for the vast majority of the time — faster, and forgiving if you drop it. I keep a **clay bar** for the jobs a mitt can't do: paint that needs real bite, and tight spots where I can mold the clay to fit.

WHAT I BUY

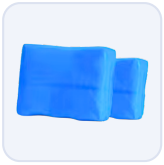


Clay Mitt

MY GO-TO

Synthetic clay on a microfiber mitt — not real clay. It's **faster to work with** and **forgiving if you drop it**, and it matches a **mild** clay bar's aggression, which covers most decon jobs. Just use **plenty of lubricant** — skimp and the synthetic clay rubs off onto the paint and is a pain to remove.

BUY →



Clay Bar

WHEN YOU NEED BITE

I keep one for two jobs: paint in **really poor condition** that needs more bite than a mitt, and **hard-to-reach areas** where I want a **play-dough-like** clay I can mold into tight spots a mitt won't fit. It's **hard to use in cold weather**, and a pain if you drop it. Always store it back in its tub with the lid on.

BUY →

PRO TIP

I don't buy dedicated clay lube — honestly, I think it's a little crazy to. Mix **1 capful of Optimum No Rinse per 32 oz spray bottle** and you've got the best clay lube in town for a fraction of the price.

DETAILING TOOLS

CAR WASHING

Pressure washer, foam cannon & the upgrades that matter

The **Sun Joe** is the budget pressure washer I point almost everyone to — cheap out of the box, but with the right upgrades it punches like a high-end machine. The **Kränzle** is the pro option most people don't need yet.

THE MACHINE

Sun Joe Electric Pressure Washer

MY BUDGET PICK

Cheap on its own, but install the upgrades below and it becomes a high-performance machine on a budget. Portable, and more than enough for what most of us need.

BUY →

Kränzle Pro Pressure Washer

ESTABLISHED SHOPS ONLY

What I run professionally — buy it once and you'll never need another. Overkill until your business is well established, and it'll **blow a fuse on customer power**, so it's not mobile-friendly without your own generator.

BUY →

NECESSARY UPGRADES

Uberflex Non-Kink Hose

A MUST

The kit hose is too short to walk around a car. The Uberflex is long, pliable, and easy to coil — I wouldn't buy a washer without it.

BUY →

MTM Short-Handle Wand

A MUST

The stock wand is long, cheap, and clumsy. The MTM short wand costs more but is far easier to maneuver and saves real time on every wash.

BUY →

Quick Disconnects (buy 2)

15MM THREADS

The Sun Joe uses **15mm threads** — use the exact QDs linked here so they fit, and grab two.

BUY →

Foam Cannon

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Don't overspend. Good foam is mostly **soap, pressure, and water flow** — not the cannon. A simple one is fine; upgrade to MTM only if your pressure is already great.

BUY →

DETAILING TOOLS

STEAMERS

What I suggest — and what I personally use

A steamer is one of the **most important tools** a detailer can own, in my opinion. Not all detailers use it as much as I do — but I can't even remember the last detail I didn't use my steamer. The **McCulloch** is what I suggest for beginners: affordable, and more than enough steam for almost any detail.

WHAT I BUY

McCulloch Steamer

WHAT I SUGGEST

The one I suggest for **beginners** — affordable, and it'll take you **very far**. More than enough steam for almost any detail; most people never need to spend more than this.

BUY →

VX 5000 Steamer

WHAT I USE

This is what I run professionally — incredibly **durable, portable, and powerful**, and so efficient I never refill it mid-detail. The catch: the company may have **gone out of business**, and I can't find it for sale anywhere anymore — which is exactly why the McCulloch is my pick for everyone else.

DANGERS OF A STEAMER

Never steam **speedometers, navigation screens, suede, degraded leather, or damaged areas**. Held too close or too long, steam causes **fading and discoloration** — and the unit gets hot enough to burn you when you pick it up or set it down. Rules of thumb: keep it moving, don't hold it close, and work in **short bursts**, checking your work as you go.

DETAILING TOOLS

EXTERIOR BRUSHES & MITTS

Wheel, wheel-well & wash gear

Exterior brushes take a beating, so I buy on **price and durability** — not brand. An **inner-barrel brush** does most of the work, two wheel-well brushes cover the rest, and wash mitts are cheap, soft, and treated as **consumables**.

WHEEL & WHEEL-WELL BRUSHES

Inner-Barrel Wheel Brush

MY MOST-USED

The brush that does most of the work. **Any brush built for the inner barrel of the wheel will do** — the type matters more than the brand. The **EZ Detail Brush** is the one I like: hard to beat on price and durability, and great for **engines, door jambs, and other tight spots** too.

BUY →

Long-Handle Wheel Well Brush

WHEEL WELLS ONLY

I only use this for scrubbing **wheel wells** — but there's truly no other way to reach an area that tight. Not brand-specific; the **Nano Skin design** is what I look for. Built right, one lasts for years.

BUY →

Short-Handle Wheel Brush

FACE OF THE WHEEL

Makes **very quick work of the face of the wheel** — faster than a detailing brush thanks to the feathered bristles. Again, go for the **design, not the brand**. Doubles as a tire-shine applicator on heavily treaded tires.

BUY →

WASH MITTS

Wash Mitts

BUY CHEAP, REPLACE OFTEN

Don't overthink it. Mitts get filthy scrubbing exterior grime and **will wear out**, so I want them **inexpensive and soft**. Expensive mitts aren't worth it — the build-quality difference is marginal at best.

BUY →

WASH & REPLACE

Replace a mitt once the microfiber loses its plush feel and starts to feel **thin and worn**. Wash them on **cold with no detergent additives**, then hand dry or tumble dry on low heat — or just **lay them out to dry**, even better.

DETAILING TOOLS

EXTRACTORS

Build your own

After using **every major extractor on the market**, I built my own. A hose extraction kit plus the **Rigid 4-gallon vacuum** gets you suction that rivals machines costing thousands, in a package that's simpler, more portable, and far more durable.

THE PURCHASES YOU NEED

RipClean Extractor Kit

THE CONVERSION

Turns your shop vac into an extractor — **water hose, vacuum hose, and extractor tool**, all assembled. RipClean took the hard work out of sourcing a conversion kit piece by piece: every part and adapter is included, so you just **connect it to the vacuum** and go.

BUY →

Rigid 4-Gallon Vacuum

CHEAPER IN-STORE AT HOME DEPOT

The other half of the setup, and the reason it works — its **suction power** is what drives extraction. **Simple, powerful, portable, and durable**, which is everything a tangle of small extractor parts isn't. Usually cheaper in-store at Home Depot than online.

BUY →

Wet Filter

DON'T SKIP IT

Extraction means pulling up **water**, so you need the foam **wet filter** — not the dry filter the vac ships with. It's what protects the motor; keep a spare since they're cheap.

BUY →

WHY BUILD YOUR OWN?

Suction **really matters** in an extractor — and you don't get strong suction until you're spending **a few thousand dollars**. Those machines improve your results only **marginally**, they're heavy and a pain for mobile work, and they're built from small parts that **break and are hard to fix**. The Rigid vacuum sidesteps all of it.

DETAILING TOOLS

INTERIOR BRUSHES & SCRUB PADS

Everything that agitates a cleaner

The right tool for each surface is the difference between **clean and damaged**. This is the exact set I keep in my caddy, matched from **gentle to aggressive** so I never reach for something too harsh.

WHAT'S IN MY CADDY

Work Stuff Detailing Brushes

HIGHEST QUALITY

The best detailing brushes on the market — **bristles don't fall out**. I buy two of the 4-packs: one to get wet agitating cleaner, one kept dry for dusting. Skip their dedicated dusting brushes.

BUY →

Magic Erasers

BUY IN BULK · USE DAMP

Unbelievably effective on plastics, vinyls, rubbers, glass, even leather. The bulk link is way cheaper than Mr. Clean. They act like **high-grit sandpaper**, so go light — on leather, a few soft passes, then check.

BUY →

Drill Brushes (Medium & Soft)

3 SHAPES: 4″, 2″, CONE

The fastest way to maximize any cleaner. **Medium** for floor mats and carpet, **soft** for upholstery. Mind the plastic backing — let it touch upholstery and it'll scratch or tear.

BUY →

Non-Abrasive Scrub Pad

GET THE NON-ABRASIVE ONE

For agitating harder than a brush allows — my favorite on **door panels and leather seats**. Confirm it's the non-abrasive version (abrasive ones exist); safe on plastics, leather, and rubber. Grab it at Walmart.

BUY →

Detailing Toothbrush

LEATHER SEAMS

For the **seams of leather seats** and stitched leather like steering wheels — scrubs trapped dirt out of tight stitching. A regular toothbrush works; these are detail-specific. Cheap, so I buy in bulk.

BUY →

Bucket Caddy

EFFICIENCY MUST

Holds every brush on this list. Run it in a **3-gallon bucket** (easier to maneuver): brushes in the pockets, bottles in the bucket, towels over the side. Don't overthink it — they're mostly the same.

BUY →

DETAILING TOOLS

MICROFIBER TOWELS

Three towels, three jobs

After **16 years** in the industry, I can promise you **three towels** will take you everywhere you want to go. It seems crazy given how many "types" the industry sells — but match the pile to the job and you're set. A plush towel is the one optional add.

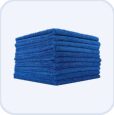
THE 3 TOWELS YOU ACTUALLY NEED

Member's Mark

INTERIOR · MOST COST-EFFECTIVE

The perfect pile for all interior work — **plastics, leather, carpet**. Interior detailing is brutal on towels, so cheap-but-effective is exactly what you want. I **downgrade them as they wear**: after 9–10 washes they drop to tires, engine, or carpet duty.

BUY →



Rag Company Edgeless

EXTERIOR ONLY

The right GSM (lower pile) for **polishing, bug removal, waxing/sealing, and ceramic coating removal**. I buy packs of 25 — they go a long way on exteriors. I keep a "never used" stash separate from the "used" for fragile paint and fresh coatings.

BUY →

Dry Me A River Waffle Weave

GLASS ONLY

Glass is hard to get right, so you genuinely need the right towel — this is it. The waffle weave balances **absorption and working time** and leaves **no fibers behind**. Glass only, washed separately. Also a great drying towel — just keep those separate from glass.

BUY →

OPTIONAL UPGRADE

Plush Towel

WHAT I USE PRO

The three above are all you truly need — but if you want a **plush towel** for jobs like ceramic coating remover, this is what I run professionally.

BUY →

DETAILING TOOLS

VACUUM

The only vac I recommend — plus the upgrades

The **4-gallon Rigid** is the one and only vacuum I suggest for detailers — simple, powerful, portable, and durable. Out of the box it's most of the way there; **2 cheap upgrades** make it the **only vac you'll ever need**.

THE MACHINE

4-Gallon Rigid Vacuum

The only vacuum I recommend for detailers. **Simple, powerful, portable, and durable** — it does everything you need and outlasts everything fancier. **Can be cheaper at Home Depot than online.**

BUY →

NECESSARY UPGRADES

Crevice Tool

THE ONLY ATTACHMENT I USE

The only attachment I run on this vacuum. **Perfect for reaching every area of any interior** — nothing else needed.

BUY →

Wet Filter

FOR WET PICKUP

Worth having for the moments you're vacuuming up **leftover cleaner or water**. Swap it in so you're not pulling moisture through the dry filter.

BUY →

MASTER DILUTION CHART

Every dilutable product in the kit, with the ratios I actually run. The bold number is my standard; the columns on either side show when I go stronger or back off. Tools and ready-to-use products don't dilute.

Ratios are **water : product** — **10:1** means 10 parts water to 1 part product. Lower number = more product = stronger.

PRODUCT	STANDARD	MORE CONCENTRATED	MORE DILUTED
WASH & DRY			
Meguiar's Hyper Wash Car wash soap	**400:1** standard	**300:1** heavier soil	—
Optimum No Rinse[1] Rinseless wash	**128:1** rinseless wash	**32:1** spray / QD / clay / glass	—
Formula 4 Spray Wax Sheeting concentrate	**10:1** standard	**5:1** hot / dark paint	—
WHEELS, TIRES & WHEEL WELLS			
Dark Fury Alkaline wheel cleaner	**10:1** wheels, tires, wells	**4:1** heavy brake dust (max)	**20:1** painted surfaces
Nano Skin Speedy Brite[2] Organic acid wheel cleaner	**4:1** wheels & rims	—	**32–99:1** water-spot → wash
Stoner More Shine Aerosol tire shine	READY TO USE — Aerosol — spray on, walk away		
Chemical Guys VRP Vinyl / rubber / plastic dressing	**5:1** wheel wells & engines	**Full** gel — dress tires by hand	—
Super Clean[3] Heavy-duty degreaser	**10:1** standard	**5:1** tires, wells, engines	**20–100:1** oxidized paint / foam
PAINT — DECON & PROTECTION			
Meguiar's Synthetic X-Press Spray wax / paint protection	READY TO USE — No dilution — spray on, wipe off		
Citrol Citrus tar remover	**Full** spot-clean tar / sap	—	**5:1** sprayable sap mix · cool paint
Rapid Remover Adhesive remover	READY TO USE — Use straight — ventilate		
INTERIOR & GLASS			
Meguiar's APC[4] All-purpose cleaner	**10:1** standard	**5:1 / Full** ext. plastics / tires & engine	**15–20:1** older / light
P&S Interior X-Press Interior cleaner	**1:1** standard	—	**4:1** older / darker / weathered
Isopropyl Alcohol Glass cleaning step	**1:1** 50/50 distilled water	—	**4:1** gentler / sensitive
CARPET, UPHOLSTERY & HEADLINER			
DS2 Carpet Shampoo Carpet shampoo	**32:1** standard	**15:1** dirty carpets	—
P&S Carpet System Carpet Bomber — only dilutable part	**5:1** standard	**3:1** heavier cleaning	**10:1** less dirty
Encap Spot Clean Headliner cleaner	READY TO USE — No dilution		
DRESSINGS & TRIM			
Solution Finish Black trim restorer	READY TO USE — No dilution — restores on contact		

NOTES — MULTI-USE PRODUCTS

1. **Optimum No Rinse** — 128:1 = rinseless bucket wash. Drop to 32:1 (≈1 capful / 32 oz) for spray detailing, glass, clay lube & final touch. Ratios eyeballed in practice.
2. **Nano Skin Speedy Brite** — 4:1 wheels & rims · 32:1 water-spot remover (paint & glass) · 40–60:1 acid pre-wash in a foam cannon · 99:1 general vehicle wash (label).
3. **Super Clean** — 10:1 standard · 5:1 tires, wheel wells & engines · 20:1 older / oxidized paint · 100:1 foam-cannon wash solution.
4. **Meguiar's APC** — Interior — 10:1 standard, 15:1 older / fragile, 20:1 light dusting. Exterior — 10:1 standard, 5:1 plastics / non-painted, full strength for tires & engine.