

Stainless Steel Care and Maintenance

In the next few paragraphs we will be covering a few important topics about highly polished stainless steel and how to care for it. American Car Craft only uses **304 #8** Machine Polished Stainless Steel in variable thicknesses ranging from 24ga to 16ga depending on the product. First and foremost your attention must be brought to the protection of the surfaces. Under any normal circumstances your stainless accessories will be subject to driving contaminants; sand particles, dirt, road grime, dust, oil and water stains. Each of these has its own method of cleaning in order to not damage the surface. We will go through each of them one by one. We will break down the most common cleaning procedures into three basic parts. It is important to know that #8 polished stainless has a perfect *machined* finish. This finish **cannot** be matched by hand polishing. Although stainless steel, like regular steel, is absolutely able to be polished, the difference between a machined finish and a hand finish is **very noticeable**. So in order to maintain the original finish you must first learn how to prevent it from being damaged.

GENERAL CLEANING:

The most significant problems that will compromise the stainless finish are dirt and/or sand particles. The best and most effective way to deal with these types of contaminants is to remove them from the stainless' surface with air. At home an air compressor will be an invaluable tool to blow away any dirt and sand you may have picked up during your travels. Blow away all dirt before cleaning, this will prevent any possibility of you picking up a particle and dragging it across your accessory. This can also be done very effectively using a can of compressed air such as a computer keyboard cleaner. Now that you have removed any and all loose particles you can proceed to cleaning with an increase level of confidence that your accessories are safe.

The process for cleaning the surface is a very strict yet easy procedure that you must train yourself to follow at all times. It is **absolutely necessary** that you learn not to wipe the surface in a back and forth motion. Wiping the surface in this way will increase the chance that you might pick up a particle or contaminate that you may have missed and drag it into the surface causing a scratch. Additionally rubbing in a back and forth motion will also create swirls and streaks in the surface which over time will build up to an unsightly finish on your accessory. In order to avoid this possibility you must train yourself to swipe the surface in one direction at a time. We recommend that the main cleaning product should be a foamy glass cleaner such as "SPRAYWAY" or "DIRTEX." These products are commonly available at Lowes, Home Depot or your local grocery store. These particular cleaners are great because they will dissolve any oils and finger prints and generally wipe away streak free.

Never spray the cleaner directly to the product when performing a general cleaning. Instead spray the cleaner directly to a Bounty paper towel or microfiber cloth. Microfiber is the #1 choice for any and all cleaning and waxing due to its non abrasive nature. The only downfall about the micro fiber is that they are a little expensive and can become contaminated so for an initial cleaning we recommend that you use a Bounty paper towel because they are soft, strong and relatively cheap. Spray the bounty towel directly with your cleaner and wipe the surface in one direction, fold the towel and wipe again. Avoid wiping the surface in a back and forth motion. When the towel is full,

throw it away and grab another. Remember that the bounty towel is relatively cheap and your accessories are expensive. The micro fiber cloth will be an indispensable tool when dusting and applying waxes.

We highly recommend applying a wax glaze because it offers a beautiful sheen and also prevents dust from sticking to the surface of your stainless accessory. It is absolutely imperative that wax be applied to a clean "dirt free" surface. Only an instant quick wax such as "Meguiar's Quik Wax" or "ACC's Meta Glaze" should be used for this. These types of waxes wipe on and wipe off leaving a nice brilliant shiny clean end result. The micro fiber cloth is great as a general surface duster and dry cleaner when contaminants are not an issue.

REMOVAL OF WATER STAINS:

The most common stubborn water stain is caused by calcium in the water that dries into the metal. They cannot be simply wiped away, to deal with this follow these steps.

- A. Calcium is a mineral that can be softened and removed by a common chemical called "CLR" (calcium/lime and rust remover) this chemical can be found in your local grocery store. Apply a small amount to a bounty towel and apply it directly to the stains. Allow the chemical to saturate the stain, **do not** start wiping it.
- B. After a few minutes wipe the area with your bounty towel in a single direction manner until the stain has been removed.
- C. The CLR will leave a slimy residue. Remove this residue with your glass cleaner, as always remember to wipe the surface in one direction.

REMOVAL OF FINGERPRINTS AND OILY STAINS:

Most finger prints and oil deposits can be cleaned away using the general cleaning instructions however sometimes there are more stubborn oily deposits that will need a more direct approach. In this situation spray your foamy glass cleaner directly to the deposit and allow the cleaner to saturate the stain for a few minutes. This should allow you to remove the stain by wiping it a couple of times gently in one direction with your Bounty towel. In a more aggressive stain there are chemical solvents that can be used such as the "3M" adhesive remover or a general wax and silicone remover that can be found at your local auto parts store. These chemicals will not damage the stainless however the same careful procedure must be followed so that you don't damage the surface in the process of cleaning the metal.

IMPORTANT TECH TIP TO REMEMBER: The surface of this type of stainless steel must be cared for just as you would care for the paint on your car. The metal is not a harder chrome finish but a relatively soft surface just like your paint. Keeping this in mind and following all the cautions and procedure listed above will result in your enjoyment of these products for years and years to come.

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