

First Timers Guide to preparing for a Concours

By Bev Gould

Have you thought about entering your car in a Concours? That is great news and I want to give you a few hints on how to prepare for entering your first Concours.

In Northern and Southern California, the two PCA Zones run a series for Concours competition. I am not sure how other parts of the country run their Concours. However what I am going to talk about is pretty universal as far as prepping your car for the first time. I am going to give you the simple approach to get you started.

After you have prepped your car and entered it for the first time, you'll want to know more about what product we recommend, this can be a long list as products change and just about everyone has an opinion.

First look at the car classifications that are offered for the event you are interested in entering. I would choose the entry level class, like Wash & Shine. In Wash & Shine, only the exterior and interior are judged. It is easier than having to clean the trunk and engine as well, this could be a bit overwhelming if you are just getting started.

For the exterior, wash the car thoroughly. This includes the wheels, bumpers, paint, windows, headlights, tires, fog lights & valance. Make sure you do not leave any water spots. To reduce water spotting, use distilled water for washing and rinsing, if you do not have distilled water around; make sure you wash the car in segments. This way you can dry it off quickly to reduce spotting.

You also want to polish the car. If your Porsche sits out all the time, then you will want to wax it, if not – a good polish will make your car sparkle. Make sure you get the entire wax/polish residue off the paint, rubber and crevices. You can use a soft bristled brush or tooth brush to remove the excess wax or polish stuck on the rubber or crevice. It will break loose and create a fine dust. Don't wipe this stuff down with a rag; it will just move it somewhere else. You are better off using a very soft bristled brush or air to whisk the dust away.

On your wheels, make sure they are cleaned and polished. Clean off the sidewalls, using Simple Green or some other cleaner to remove any excess tire dressing or grime. Use a soft bristled brush to scrub the tires with cleaner. You will want to be able to rub your fingers across the sidewalls without your fingers turning black or brown. On the wheels themselves, polish them, clean around the lug nuts, as this is an area judges particularly love to check. Then make sure you don't have any excess polish along the rim or lug nut area. Don't put a dressing on the wheels, this stuff just picks up more dirt from the road. You don't have to clean the wheel wells for a Concours, but it is a good idea to do so, as it makes the overall presentation of the car look better.

Now that you are done with the exterior, it looks pretty darn good huh? Take a few photos, it is fun to chronicle your efforts and share them with your friends.

The next area to clean for a Wash & Shine Class is the Interior. You are going to clean just about everything that is visible and then some. I will try to point you through the basics to get you through your first Concours, but this area does require attention to detail. First clean the windows, why first, well you will have to climb in the car to clean them. When you do this you also bring in with you and dirt and debris from the outside or your shoes. I'll be honest, I hate cleaning the windows, finding a good streak free cleaner is a lot of trial and error. I have found that a solution of Distilled water and rubbing alcohol works best with a micro fiber towel.

Now that the windows are done, the next to clean is the upholstery. If you have leather seats, get a good leather cleaner and conditioner. I have used a few of them, but recently have been using Connolly's Hide Care. The important thing with Leather interior is to keep the leather conditioned, so it does not dry out and crack. If your upholstery has seams, make sure you clean these as well. Dirt and dust collects in the crevices. Use a soft bristled brush or toothbrush to clean these out. Clean the seat belt handles, if these are chrome, chrome cleaners like Wenol or Mothers will polish them up. Next area is the dash, instruments, glove box and steering column. Make sure these are all clean of dust and dirt. If the dash is leather, it is important to condition this as well. Make sure you clean the vents and defroster vents. Take an old soft cotton sock and use it like a glove, it works great to pick up loose dust and dirt. Spray a bit of water on the glove to make it slightly damp, and it will pick up the dust and dirt without depositing it somewhere else in the interior. One area many people forget about cleaning is under the dash – I know you are saying WHAT, under the dash. But think about it, it gets just as dirty and dusty under there as anywhere else on the car. The stuff over time can build up and is just yucky. It also can get on the carpet or affect those with allergies if not removed. Use the sock method I mentioned before and it will clean it up – judges love to look in this area. Another favorite spot for the judges (mine too) is the door latches, these get really dirty over time, you can clean these with WD40 and they turn out great. I do not lubricate mine except with WD40, but if you want to lubricate the latches, make sure the lubricant is clean. When this lubricant gets dirty it becomes abrasive. Don't forget to clean the console or door pockets, if you have them, they should be dust/dirt free and empty when you show the car.

Now we move onto the carpets and flooring. First, a good vacuuming is required. This includes along the edges of the carpet, under the mats if removable, etc.. Use a crevice tool to get those narrow or hard to reach areas. If your carpet is spotted with dirt, you should shampoo this out if possible. Don't get the carpet too wet when shampooing and allow it to dry before the show.

The day of the show, bring sunscreen, hat, sunglasses, beverages, chair and a mat. You will also want to bring some of your cleaning supplies and tools to do touch up work once you are at the show.

These are the basics; we can go into a lot more detail on how to prep an automobile for a Concours. If you take your car to a detailer first, you will still want to go through some of the steps above.

I have been showing my 1970 911E for the last 15 years +. My car had been raced, toured and rallied for years, so I know how tough it can seem to get started. But I have enjoyed seeing how the car has improved over the years and it is an award winning automobile. Once you get it clean, it is not that difficult to keep it clean. I will try to write an article every month or so to give you some tips I have

come up with. I am also asking some friends of mine to write a few tips as well. We will post these in Tips & Tricks section of www.tcsgarage.com website, which is owned by my husband Tom and myself. If you have any questions, you can reach me at bev@tcsgarage.com.

Here is little check list for both the exterior and interior to get you started – Good Luck

<i>Exterior</i>		<i>Interior</i>	
Wash Car		Windows	
Polish if Needed		Upholstery	
Clean Wheels		Upholstery seams	
Lug Nuts		Dash	
Windows		Steering column	
Valance		Instruments	
Rubber Trim		Glove Box & Door Pockets	
Lights		Vacuum	
Bumpers		Carpets	
Vents		Vents	

Bev Gould has been involved in PCA for over 30 years. She is the former Zone 8 Representative for PCA and has held many positions within the club. Her 1970 911E has won many awards in both PCA and Non PCA Concours d' Elegance shows. Bev is Vice President of TC's Garage which she owns together with her husband Tom and can be reached at bev@tcsgarage.com.