



There is a trade-off between detailing fully-faired motorcycles and cleaning those bikes with exposed engines. While it might only take 15 minutes to wash a Gold Wing, this is offset by the time it takes to wax the fairing. Fastidious owners will also periodically remove and clean everything underneath the bodywork. But for most of these people, such care is a cathartic exercise and not viewed as a chore.

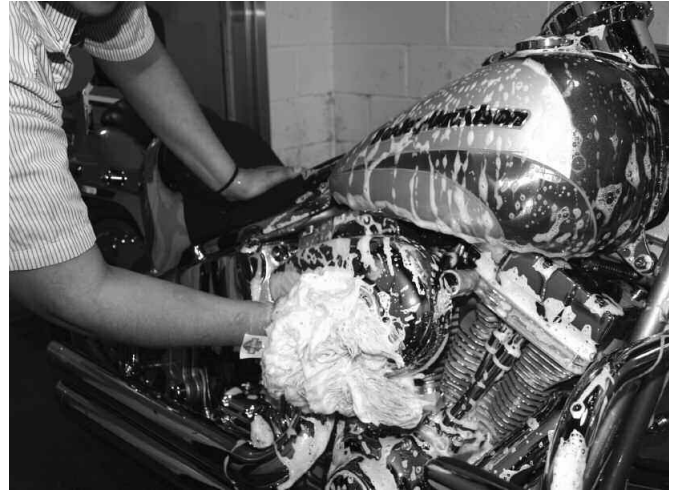
ton towels' thicker pile for removing the dried residue. And several microfiber towels are ideal for finishing work and detailing. Also, buy several heavy-duty cleaning ("shop") rags and/or sponges for use on those areas of the motorcycle where you don't want to use a mitt (e.g., engine, drivetrain, etc.). You might want to consider getting a less expensive; i.e., sacrificial, synthetic fiber glove mitt for the wheels, lower body parts, and the suspension too. A stiff-bristle, wooden-handle (not metal) paintbrush, a nylon (not brass) toothbrush, and a toilet bowl brush (or equivalent) can also be invaluable tools for getting at those hard-to-reach crevices or for cleaning wheels.

Washing

The quickest way to prematurely age any vehicle is to simply do nothing and allow the dirt to attack your bike's engine and/or finish. Having the right tools helps. But knowing how to use them is equally important—and it all begins with soap and water.

We use a liquid soap specifically designed for washing cars/motorcycles, not powder soaps, since undissolved particles can be abrasive. We also avoid dishwashing liquids at all costs. These are designed to remove the dried-on and encrusted Lobster Florentine that you had for brunch three years ago and they will remove the wax from your bike with the same efficiency as Rosey O'Donnell Hoovering her way through an all-you-can-eat buffet. All wax manufacturers (Meguiars, Eagle One, RainDance, Turtle Wax, etc.) sell their own brand of car wash soap which can be purchased at most automotive parts retailers or discount chains like Target, Wal Mart, etc. Generally speaking, the stronger the concentration of soap, the more wax you are likely to remove. Read the manufacturers' suggested directions and then use half the recommended amount of soap. Also, avoid using hot water when mixing the soap in your bucket, since this will soften and facilitate removal of the wax.

Ideally the bike should be parked in the shade and cool to the touch before washing. Begin by washing the wheels first with the bucket, mitt/sponge and shop rag that you identified for this purpose. Properly cleaning the wheels can easily take as much time as washing the entire bike. If you start washing the painted surfaces, you risk having the water dry on the finish leaving spots before you've completed cleaning the wheels—so start working on the rims first. Also, be careful about using cleaning agents designed for



Use only a mild liquid soap designed specifically for washing cars or motorcycles and not powder detergents, since undissolved particles can be abrasive. A thick pile wash mitt is also best for washing vulnerable areas like windshields, chrome and painted surfaces. The longer fibers transfer the dirt away from these areas and help reduce the risk of scratches.

automobile wheels. Some special products used to clean car rims are for non-clear-coat wheels and contain acids that will etch and can aesthetically ruin your beautiful aluminum rims.

If a specialty cleaning detergent or engine degreaser is going to be applied to the engine and/or drivetrain, the time to do it is after you're done with the wheels, but before beginning on the painted surfaces. In this way, you can thoroughly wash away any harsh chemicals used to clean the engine that may have inadvertently been sprayed onto the bodywork.

Next, get the wash mitt and "clean" bucket selected specifically for use on the painted surfaces. Thoroughly wet the bike down with a garden hose, trying not to spray water directly at any seals, gaskets, or electrical connections. Also, use a continuous stream of low-pressure water. Even Holy Water will eventually find its way into unwanted areas if a 10,000-psi pressure washer or a fire hydrant is used. Start at the top with the windshield and work your way down. Also, use plenty of water. As one expert detailer wrote, "If you spare the water, you risk ruining the finish." And if you accidentally drop your mitt on the ground, set it aside and get a new one—the risk of potentially ruining your paint is just too great.

With respect to cleaning vinyl seats, use the same techniques described above and simply use soap and water (see Caring for Leather). We do not recommend applying a plastic/vinyl conditioner afterwards since it could leave a film that might be slippery and, therefore, dangerous. Besides, vinyl saddles hold up extremely well, last many years with minimal care, and are very inexpensive to recover/replace.

The bike should then be rinsed thoroughly and dried as soon as possible. As suggested earlier, the best method of accomplishing this is to use a quality synthetic chamois, silicone squeegee, 100% cotton cloth diaper, or a soft, clean terrycloth towel. We do not advocate using compressed air regularly to facilitate the drying process since this can easily force water into electrical areas, bearings, or past seals.

For finishing work and detailing, the miracle elixir that is WD-40 works wonders to restore faded black parts and colored plastic pieces on the bike; e.g., turn signal switches, hoses, cables, air box covers, instrument housings, mirrors, brake calipers (do not spray directly on calipers; apply WD-40 on a rag or toothbrush first), etc. Also, WD-40 is great for removing imbedded dirt or wax residue on gas caps, fuel injector covers, knee pads, turn signals and