

Your Boat's Gel Coat Finish

Congratulations! You are the proud owner of a new power or sail boat. You are also the owner of a new Valspar Gel Coat finish on the hull and/or topside, and we would like you to be as proud of it as we are. That beautiful, shiny new color you love is the result of many years of gel coat research, testing and development.

But as proud as we are of the Gel Coat, no finish is totally impervious to chemicals and weathering. Imagine what a brand new car could look like if allowed to sit at a marina for years with no cover and no washing or waxing. With the same minimum maintenance you would ordinarily give your new automobile's finish, your boat's Gel Coat finish will retain its depth of color and gloss for years.

General Maintenance

Normal maintenance of your gel coated fiberglass boat is similar to the care you would give your automobile. In general, automotive cleaners and waxes work well, as do marine cleaners and waxes commonly sold.

Do not use caustic, highly alkaline (high pH) cleaners or those containing ammonia. These cleaning agents may darken white or off-white weathered gel coat surfaces. The staining that results is a chemical reaction within the weathered gel coat, and can be removed with a rubbing compound or by light sanding with 400 grit sandpaper followed by application of rubbing compound and waxing.

Cleaning

Periodic cleaning with a mild detergent product is necessary to remove normal accumulations of soil. This soil is the result of regular use of your boat as well as environmental pollutants, soot, smog, etc. General washing as needed prevents soil build-up, staining, etc.

Waxing

As the gel coat begins to lose its gloss from constant exposure to the natural environment and pollutants, it will require some special attention to restore the original gloss and color. After washing with mild soaps and detergents, a good polishing with a self-

cleaning marine or automotive wax will restore most of the original gloss. A fall and spring wax job is generally all that is needed to maintain the original appearance. If the surface has been allowed to weather badly, and cleaning and wax polishing does not restore the finish satisfactorily, then compounding will be necessary.

Compounding

Please see your marine dealer for advice. Polishing compound (fine abrasive) or rubbing compound (coarser abrasive) is recommended for use on fiberglass boats to remove scratches, stains, or a severely weathered surface. Polishing or rubbing compound can be applied by hand or by mechanical means, such as an electrical or pneumatic buffer. After the scratched, stained or weathered surface has been removed, it should be waxed to enhance the gloss and color while providing a seal to retard staining or new soil accumulation.

Removing the Discoloration

We suggest your marine dealer is best equipped and trained to do this work. Discoloration of the gel coated fiberglass surface may occur if regular washing and waxing has been neglected. Discolored areas are very shallow in depth and, in fact, are on the surface. They can be removed by gently wet-sanding only the affected areas with 600 grit "wet or dry" sandpaper to remove the blemishes. **Always sand in one direction.** All areas, including curves, must be sanded in the same direction. Use plenty of water. After sanding, dry the areas and ensure all the discoloration has been removed. If not, repeat the process.

Once all discoloration has been removed the affected surface area will need to be buffed. Buffing, using an electrical or pneumatically operated buffer at low speed (1750 rpm - 2250 rpm), will restore the luster to the sanded surface. Use a soft wool pad and apply a generous amount of rubbing compound using circular motion. When the buffing has been completed, wash off the rubbing compound with clean water. Dry the surface.

Wax the boat with a high-grade automotive wax.

Repairs

Some damage to the gel coat surface during the life of your boat is unavoidable. **Repairs should only be attempted by trained, experienced professionals at your local marine dealer.**

Scratches – If the scratch is in the gel coat surface and has not penetrated the fiberglass, an automotive polishing compound can be used to rub it out. The compound can be applied by a power buffer or by hand on a dampened rag using plenty of "elbow grease." The scratch may not disappear completely, but it will be decidedly less noticeable.

Gouges and Chips – The recommended patching procedure is as follows:

- Clean area to be repaired with acetone solvent to remove all traces of wax and oil.
- Thoroughly mix 1 tablespoon of "Patch Paste" with 2 or 3 drops of catalyst on a scrap piece of cardboard.
- Apply mixture to pit, chip, or gouge with a single-edge razor blade, matching the surface and contour of the area being repaired. It is better to apply slightly more patch than absolutely necessary to avoid having to fill the damaged spot a second time.
- Allow to harden thoroughly for two to three hours.
- Using fine grit "wet or dry" sandpaper on a sanding block, wet-sand the patch until it is level with the surrounding surface.
- Finish using automotive rubbing compound in the same manner as for scratches.

Refinishing

If a fiberglass boat has been severely scratched or weathered to the point that it is no longer restorable by the preceding methods, it may then be refinished very satisfactorily with two-package or two-part aliphatic urethane enamels now available. **Refinishing should only be done by experienced professionals.**