

Auto interior maintenance and cleaning tips

A number of factors are involved in keeping a vehicle functioning and looking good. Ensuring a vehicle interior is clean and tidy is easily overlooked, but such efforts can improve the driving experience.

Drivers who want their cars and trucks to look their best should not forget their vehicle interiors. Drivers unsure where to start can spruce up their vehicle interiors in the following ways.

- Remove any trash. Wrappers, receipts, empty water bottles, and other items can quickly pile up inside a car, especially for drivers who have young children. Routinely go through the vehicle to gather and remove debris.

- Vacuum the interior. Start off with a can of compressed air and blow out dust and any other dirt that has accumulated in tight crevices. Then use a high-powered vacuum to conduct a thorough cleaning. Pay attention to the seams of car seats, door handles, armrests, floor mats (and under them), underneath child safety seats, and the trunk or cargo area. If you don't have a vacuum with a lot of suction, utilize one at a do-it-yourself car wash location.

- Scrub floor mats. Drivers with rubber mats can remove them and make a mild cleaning solution of a few drops of dish soap and warm water. Use a soft-bristled brush to clean the mats. Upholstered mats can be shampooed

using a carpet cleaner. Then rinse and hang to dry. All mats should be completely dry before being returned to the vehicle.

- Clean the upholstery. Seats can get dirty and dingy over time. For cloth vehicle seats, use a proper spray or foam upholstery cleaner. All-purpose cleaner can work on vinyl seats, but leather seats require a special leather soap and conditioner. Avoid products with silicone, which can stain your clothes and may make interior surfaces too slippery.

- Address glass surfaces. Turn your attention to the windshield, windows and mirrors. You can use a store-bought glass cleaner on these surfaces and a lint-free cloth. Avoid products containing ammonia, which may damage tinting on windows.

- Consider lingering odors. If the interior of the car has an odor, the cabin air filter may need to be changed, or there may be water entering the vehicle somewhere and creating a musty smell. Seek out any problems and address. A car air freshener can further improve the interior smell.

A thorough deep cleaning can be done at least once a month to keep a vehicle's interior fresh and clean. However, keeping up with interior cleaning and maintenance by doing small jobs regularly will reduce the need for routine deep cleaning.



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A spring lawn revitalization strategy

New growth is a hallmark of spring, whether it plays out in the birth of birds and bunnies or with the returned buds on trees and plant stalks. While most greenery rebounds naturally, lawns may need a little extra TLC in order to return to their once lush, green glory.

Revitalizing a lawn in spring is a multifaceted process but can be well worth the reward when green grass adds to a beautiful landscape and functional yard. Here is how to get started when the weather warms, courtesy of The Farmer's Almanac and The Home Depot.

- Clean up debris. Spend a few hours raking up leaves from the lawn and removing any other winter debris like twigs so that air can reach the grass below. Also remove any thatch that has developed.

- Test the soil. Take a sample of the soil to determine its pH level and nutrient needs. Then you can make adjustments to set a strong foundation for the lawn to grow.

- Do some weeding. Pull out any weeds that have poked through early on and apply a



pre-emergent herbicide to prevent additional weeds from taking over.

- Start the aeration process. A core aerator punches holes into the soil. This enables air and water to penetrate through to the roots.

- Overseed the lawn. Apply grass seeds over the lawn, paying special attention to any bare or thin areas so that the seed will fill in the lawn.

- Water consistently. It is important to water the lawn deeply and consistently, especially when the weather is dry, to help promote strong root development.

- Time fertilizer correctly. Ap-

ply a spring fertilizer around three weeks after the lawn starts to turn green or after the first two or three mowings. If fertilizer is applied too early it can feed weeds instead of the grass and result in fertilizer runoff.

- Mow to an appropriate height. Begin to mow when the ground is dry enough and the grass is long enough to need cutting. Leave some length to the lawn; otherwise, sunlight will reach the soil and encourage weed seeds to germinate.

With a little elbow grease at the start of spring, homeowners can establish strong and healthy lawns.

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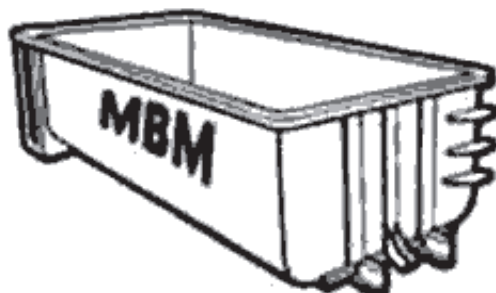
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