

# Clean Sweep

Making your Mini gleam at the summer shows isn't as difficult, or as expensive, as you think.

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**T**he tricks many owners use to improve the look of their Minis are well within the reach of anyone; a lot of it comes down to simply using the right products to clean and prep your Mini and adding a few choice mods to complete the look of the car. We're going to break the Mini down into different sections (not literally!) and look at each part, starting off with quick ways to enhance its appearance. The vast majority of things don't involve great amounts of money — just time, effort and know-how.

Those who want to go further and try concours should check out the handy hints on page 106, while on page 103 we look at the products that are essential for making your car look great. For now though, it's all about elbow grease...

## Bodywork and paint

The bodywork and paint are the biggest area on a car, and the first thing that you notice when you see a car for the first time. You can make as many modifications as you like but if the exterior basics aren't looking good before you start then you'll waste a lot of time and money.

Paint is a delicate material and the rigours of driving — whether salt on the road in winter or dust in the summer — and washing with a gritty sponge take their toll. As well as all this, the sun's rays reduce the surface to an oxidised state that needs care and attention.

Start by giving the exterior of the car a good wash, going over the panels right up to the edges and into the corners of the seams, making sure that everywhere has been covered. Rinse off well and use a good quality natural or synthetic chamois to dry off and remove any streaks.

Using a paint-restoring paste, working on one panel at a time, follow the instructions to the letter and cut back the top layer of oxidised paint to reveal the fresh paint below. You don't need to apply great amounts of product to the surface but instead almost rub it away, creating greater friction between the cloth you're using and the paint. The added heat will help with the removal of scratches and there'll be less residue to remove afterwards.

Add a coat or two of good quality car wax to seal in the new shine, again using the same principal of almost polishing away the product. Use a finishing cloth to remove any streaks of residue and enhance the shine further. Finally, use a colour-matched pen to touch up any stone chips or deeper scratches that have appeared on your paintwork.

**Quick budget option?** Invest in a decent bottle of polish and get that paint gleaming. All it takes is a little bit of elbow grease.

**Money no object?** Have all those little dents, scratches and areas of corrosion attended to by a professional, or, if you're feeling really flush, go for a full respray in the colour of your choice.



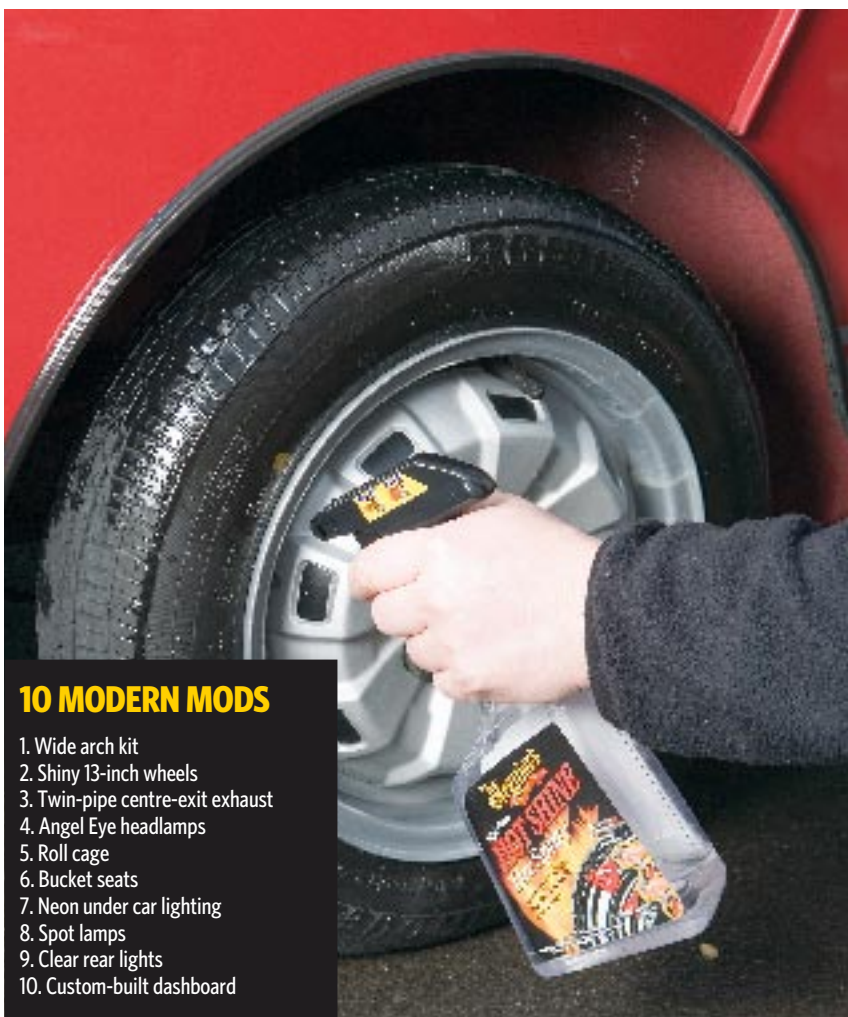
## Tyres and rubber trim

The sun, salt and abrasive dust have the same effect on your car's rubber components as they do to your paintwork. This manifests itself by turning black rubber a brownish colour as the outer layer is oxidised. Clean your tyres with a stiff brush to remove any muck then check the side walls, both inside and out, for any damage such as cuts or bulges. These compromise safety and need replacing. Also, take a look at the tread for any uneven wear: if your tracking is out, for example, you may not see the wear on the inside tread area.

Dry the tyre off and add a tyre dressing to the side walls to improve the appearance and help prevent cracking by lubricating the outer layer of rubber. The rest of your Mini's rubber trim, such as front and rear screen rubbers and door and window seals, will not only look better after a rubber dressing, it'll also live longer. Just remember that surfaces which rely on the natural friction of rubber to make them effective, such as tyre treads and brake pedal rubbers, should not be coated in rubber dressing — you don't want slippery tyres or pedals! Also, be careful not to get any onto glass as this can cause bad smearing.

**Quick budget option?** Use a bit of black shoe polish on tyres and rubber and buff them up.

**Money no object?** Get new tyres. Nothing looks better than a good quality set of new rubber with matching tread patterns.



### 10 MODERN MODS

1. Wide arch kit
2. Shiny 13-inch wheels
3. Twin-pipe centre-exit exhaust
4. Angel Eye headlamps
5. Roll cage
6. Bucket seats
7. Neon under car lighting
8. Spot lamps
9. Clear rear lights
10. Custom-built dashboard

## Chrome

Some people love loads of chrome, and others go completely the other way and try to remove as much as possible from their Mini. Either way, looking after what you've got is very important and the more you do have, the more work that will be required to keep it in good condition.

Don't use a cleaning product or cloth that's too abrasive or you'll go through the layer of chrome plating to the metal underneath, resulting in a tarnished finish and making it more susceptible to rust. Stainless steel is easier to scratch than chrome, so be careful on that too.

Replacing any pitted or rusting chrome is the only way to improve the appearance. If you have a rare Mini with original parts you can get a specialist company to re-chrome it for you, but this can be costly. Before adding chrome accessories, think about the look that you want — chrome is fantastic against dark colours but can be lost on lighter ones.

**Quick budget option?** Chrome wiper blade arms and washer jets brighten up the outside of your Mini a treat.

**Money no object?** Replace the front grille with a Mk1 and moustache for that classic look.



## Glass

Cleaning the outside of your windscreen with soap and water does the job, but the only way to really get all the muck and grime removed is to use a cream-based cleaner. Remember to wind down the windows so you can get at the top of the glass, and clean inside and out as well as right onto the corners. When you're done, add a water repellent to the outside of the glass to keep it looking good for longer.

**Quick budget option?** Wet newspaper is a quick, tried-and-tested way to remove traffic film from the outside of your windscreen.

**Money no object?** Add a light tint to your glass for that luxury look.



## Engine bay

There's more to a good-looking bay than just a few bits of chrome and some paint; take a look around the perimeter at things like the wiring loom, brake and clutch master cylinders and your radiator. You can spend a lot of time cleaning everything, but one of the first things you need to do is to give the engine and surrounding paintwork a good clean.

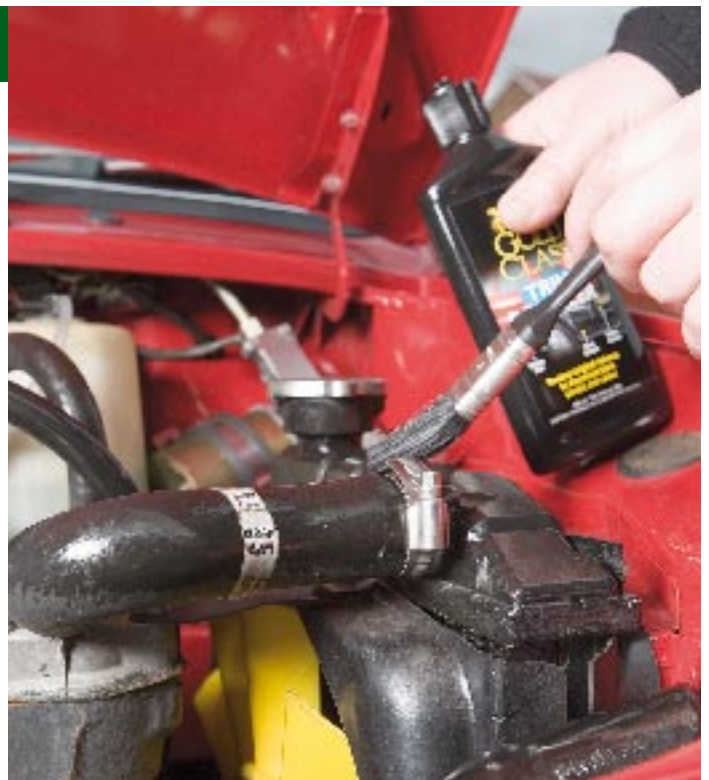
Protect any electrical items by placing plastic bags or cling film over them and use a good quality engine degreaser. Give the product time to work on all of the muck, using a brush to get it into all of the recesses and tight corners. Rinse off with plenty of water and start the engine to aid drying off.

Check the condition of the wiring loom; if there are ugly connections then a bit of carefully applied insulation tape makes everything look good again. If you're feeling competent then rewinding with the same colour insulation tape is easier and cheaper than replacing the whole loom (although if you see any frayed or scorched wiring, consider a new loom for safety's sake).

A bit of enamel paint on the ancillaries and some shiny new hosepipe clips improve the look of the whole area. You can also fit chrome brackets, nuts and bolts, but remember that the more you add the more you'll have to clean. Finally, a new rocker cover can do wonders for an otherwise drab engine bay; they're available in a wide range of colours.

**Quick budget option?** Rubber dressing on the rubber and plastic items makes them shine and a chrome rocker cover gets the engine sparkling.

**Money no object?** Why not replace the brake and clutch master cylinders with colour-coded or chrome items for that custom look.





## Wheels

Where you start all depends on the look you want. For classic street racer styling go for 10 or 12-inch wheels, or even opt for super-wide 13-inch flavour. Whatever you choose, you really have to keep on top of the condition of your wheels. Brake dust and heat combine to slowly destroy the wheel's finish, turning bright silver a yellowy brown colour and eventually lifting off the paint.

Once in a while, remove the wheels and clean both the outside and inside; you can also apply polish to keep them looking good for longer. If alloys are outside your budget, a new set of hubcaps works wonders.

**Quick budget option?** Smarten up with a set of chrome wheelnuts or a coat of paint on bare steel.

**Money no object?** Look like a racer with some anodised split-rim designs.

### 10 QUICK IMPROVEMENTS

1. Clean out the doorbins
2. Steam clean the engine
3. Black up the tyres
4. Clean the glass inside and out
5. Touch up those stone chips and scratches
6. Polish the paint
7. Clean the seats
8. Add an air freshener
9. Scrub out your arches
10. Fit new carpet over mats

## Upholstery and interior trim

You should start off by vacuuming away all of the dust and surface muck, then use an upholstery cleaning spray (test it on a small patch first). When the seats have dried, vacuum them again to remove the last of the dirt. If your upholstery is beyond hope, keep an eye on the Minimag classifieds and at autojumbles for a new interior. People who are rebuilding a Mini often ditch the original trim and you could find a bargain. In the meantime, a set of budget seat covers will help to hide a multitude of grotty trim evils.

**Quick budget option?** Invest in some trim cleaner and get stuck in! There are a wide range of products on the market suitable for all finishes, from velour through to leather.

**Money no object?** Some firms will make you a whole custom interior: think up a colour scheme, choose from leather or vinyl and go from there!





## Carpets

Start by vacuuming — you may even want to remove the carpets and clean underneath, as grit there will slowly damage the carpet from the underside. It'll also be easier to dry the carpet after shampooing if it's out of the car. Use a stiff brush to really work the shampoo into the pile of the carpet then, when it's dry, use a vacuum to remove the last of the dirt and any shampoo residue.

**Quick budget option?** A complete set of overmats in the colour of your choice can be picked up at shows for very little.

**Money no object?** Specialist trimming companies can create a carpet from a larger range of colours and variety of material.



## Boot interior

Is your boot currently an almighty mess of mucky spare wheel, tangled stereo wiring and surface rust? Remove all the junk, vacuum out what remains behind and smarten everything up with a coat of Hammerite. It's available in a range of colours and, used here, helps to protect an otherwise vulnerable area of your Mini.

**Quick budget option?** Pick up a new boot carpet or bootlid liner from a show.

**Money no object?** Trim out the whole boot, adding custom details such as an integrated tool kit.



## Underneath

Don't forget the underside of your Mini when cleaning everything else; all of that mud and salt is just sitting there, holding moisture and creating a good environment for the dreaded tin worm to breed. At the very least remove the wheels and, using a strong flow of water with a stiff brush, get the mud out from around all of the nooks and crannies, being careful around any brake or suspension components. Take your Mini for a trip around the block to let any excess water drain away again.

**Quick budget option?** Adding a coat of paint to the underside of your Mini both smartens it up and protects it.

**Money no object?** Have the subframes completely stripped and repainted in contrasting colours, then add braided hoses and lowered suspension.

## 10 CHEAP MODS

1. New bonnet badge
2. New set of wheelarches
3. Chrome wiper blades and washer jets
4. Replace dull and scratched bumpers
5. Chrome exhaust tailpipe
6. Union Jack or chequered roof
7. Replace cracked numberplate
8. Chrome sill moulding
9. New door mirrors
10. New grille