



## How To: Polish Your Aluminum

As requested I've put a quick write-up together of how I go about polishing my aluminum. As there are many methods to polishing aluminum and getting the same outcome, I simply offer this as my method which has brought me great results. I hope you enjoy and find great results as well. Feel free to ask any questions you may have!!

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For the write-up I will use my recently discussed: **Wagner Ware Cast Aluminum 902 B Sugar Scoop**. My pictures start as I was 1/3 of the way into the polishing. I was a little excited when I got it home and started working before I took pictures. The scoop was in pretty rough shape with rough milling marks on the interior of the scoop and with corrosion all around. So here it goes:

- The following is the supply list for the entire process:
  - Piece to be polished
  - 400, 600, 800, 1000, 1500, and 2000 grit Wet/Dry sanding paper
  - Your choice of Rubbing compound and Polishing compound
  - Your choice of Car wax
  - Cotton rags and about 2gal. of Elbow Grease
  - I used the items pictured below:



### **Step 1:**

- Start off by **washing** the piece thoroughly with warm soapy water and a scotch-brite type scrubber. Don't be afraid to really scrub and remove any stuck-on debris (dirt, oil, corrosion, etc.). Don't worry about scratches as they will all be removed in the process. Dry the piece and prepare for sanding.

### **Step 2:**

- Start Sanding with the **400** Grit Sanding paper to remove all remaining Corrosion/Oxidation down to clean metal. This is also the time to remove any unwanted deep scratches, dings, imperfections, etc. Ultimate goal of this step is to remove any imperfections that are deeper than the 400 grit sanding marks.

**\*\*Tip:** I prefer to utilize dry sanding for the heavier grit sanding and move to wet-sanding as I move to the finer grit steps. Also sand in a back-and-forth motion and refrain from using circular motions.

### **Step 3:**

- Move to **600** Grit paper and continue dry-sanding in the opposite direction of the previous step. This will allow you to see that all sanding marks from the previous step are removed. Once all sanding marks from the 400 grit step are removed and only 600 grit sanding marks remain, clean the piece under running water and remove all sanding dust and debris.

-The following are pictures of my progress after Step 3 was complete:



#### **Step 4:**

- This is where I prefer to switch to wet-sanding. As I move to the **800** grit paper I choose to wet-sand as the paper seems to gum-up rather quickly due to the fine powder produced. I usually do my wet-sanding under running water in a large slop-sink. Doing this keeps the sanding paper as well as the piece clean, allowing for smooth and even sanding. Again, remember to switch sanding directions to ensure you remove sanding marks from the previous 600 grit.

#### **Step 5:**

- The remaining three grit levels can all be summed up in this step. For the **1000, 1500,** and **2000** grit levels, you simply follow the previous instructions. Simply move from one grit-level to the next switching sanding directions and ensuring all sanding marks from the previous grit level have been removed. After all levels of sanding have been completed and only the 2000 grit sanding marks remain, clean the piece with one of the cotton rags under warm running water and dry before moving to the next step.

#### **Step 6:**

- This step is where you really get to see how well your hard work paid off. Thoroughly moisten one of the cotton rags and get a quarter-sized spot of **rubbing compound** on the moist rag. Begin rubbing back-and-forth, side-to-side, whatever makes you happy as directionality isn't an issue anymore. You will need to use some of that elbow grease in this step and really buff. Occasionally switch rags and continue to use more compound.

**\*\*Tip:** I do this step **twice** to ensure the piece was thoroughly buffed and I covered every little spot cleaning the piece between buffing sessions.

#### **Step 7:**

- This Step will put that final mirror-like finish on the piece and bring out that brilliant shine. Just as you buffed the piece in the previous step, moisten a new cotton rag and apply the same quarter-sized amount of **polishing compound** and begin buffing. Again, directionality is no longer an issue in this step and the main importance of this step is to continually turn to clean portions of the rag and switch to a new rag as needed using more compound as necessary.

**\*\*Tip:** As in the previous step, I do this step **2-3** times cleaning the piece between each time. Use plenty of elbow grease and enjoy watching yourself buff in the reflection of your beautiful new finish.

#### **Step 8:**

- This step is to help ensure that all your hard work and that beautiful new finish says looking like the day you finished it. Get a new cotton rag, applicator pad, or microfiber cloth, whichever you prefer for waxing your car. Just as you would wax your car, utilize that wonderful wax-on, wax-off method and thoroughly wax the entire piece. As you buff off the final coat of wax you should be left with that beautiful mirror-like shine that now has a strong protective coating on it thanks to the wax which should protect the piece from further corrosion/ oxidation.

-The following are final pictures of my Sugar Scoop after all sanding, buffing, polishing, and waxing:



**\*\*Continuing care:** This step should be remembered and may differ for certain pieces/ uses. This piece will be for my personal display and will rarely be used; therefore it will only need a re-waxing once a year at most to keep the finish. If your piece is going to be used, you should keep in mind that re-waxing more frequently may be in order as to keep the piece protected.

- As I mentioned at the beginning, Feel free to ask any questions you may have and I hope that you have found this write-up useful/ easy to understand.

Thanks and Enjoy!!

-Jake