



Dr. Detail

by Wayne Dzien

Saving The Best For Last

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The majority of us don't bother to detail our engines because we are worried about damaging something and have absolutely no idea of how to fix it. By the way, you can damage the engine if you don't know what you're doing. In 1996, Marsha and I attempted to clean the engine of our '94 Corvette to get it in show-ready condition. We used the garden hose and sprayed a stream of water at maximum velocity on the LT-1 engine. We thought that since cars are driven in the rain, no big deal with a little H₂O in the engine compartment. What could happen or go wrong? Let me tell you, DON'T SPRAY anything on a distributor! That cost me \$1,000! But I digressed. You can use a hose, but take the time to do the following: use plastic bags to cover up anything electrical in nature and the spark plugs. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Side bar - there are two schools of thought regarding if the engine should be "cold" or "warm" in cleaning. One school believes that a "warm to the touch" engine gets the best results. They are nuts! No way am I going to tell you to start your car and warm up the engine and they apply plastic bags on HOT engine parts. You don't want your Fiero to be the next towering inferno; they already have that bad rap! In addition, if your ride didn't start a blaze then, when you start spraying on degreaser, it would stick to the engine and not come off unless you used a fire hose on it and you don't want to do that for obvious reasons.

Please consider the following to make this job not such a big deal:

1. Find a nice area either in your garage or driveway, depending on how dirty and greasy your engine is to begin with. If you've got 25 years of gunk on it, use the driveway or street. If not, you can do it in the garage, but prepared to clean up the floor after you're done.

2. Put plastic bags over key areas to protect anything electrical along with the sparkplugs.

3. Purchase (or borrow from your wife or significant other) a "degreaser". Marsha and I have used "Simple Green" on all of our cars with excellent results. The only down side was when Marsha, not me, got some Simple Green on the white portion of our '93 Camaro Pace car. It made the white paint turn a pale shade of green. It took me about six months of Meguiar's polishing to get ride of it.

4. Use a car vac or your vacuum cleaner and attempt to suck up whatever you can from the engine, bottom of the rear deck lid, and engine bay. You won't believe what you will come up with!

5. Being careful and spraying only a section of the engine compartment at a time, wash it down with some warm water, not hot. Suggestion: you can use the garden hose gently, but I prefer taking an empty Windex sprayer, clean it out and load it up with warm H₂O and go crazy; there is a lot more control over where the water goes. Start with the deck lid and work down-do this in sections; the size depending on how long it will take you to wipe each area down with your degreaser. I suggest using a fairly liberal amount of water.

6. Now that you have the engine compartment wet and water is dripping down on you from the deck lid, spray a small amount of degreaser working from top to bottom and let it do its thing for about five minutes. In my experience, this waiting time lets whatever product you are using cut through the grime and makes it easier to remove.

7. Next, take a micro fiber towel and wipe it down. I suggest having a bunch of these available, depending on how dirty the engine bay is. You will need at least one to get the majority of the dirt off and another clean one to complete the process. It works.

8. Engine time. On the moist engine, apply your degreaser. Let it set there for five minutes, on really dirty or greasy engines apply a lot of it, but don't get too carried away. You don't want a pool of cleaner either on your garage floor or driveway. Spray off the product and clean with micro fiber towels. You may have to repeat this process a few times on your trouble spots. If your spouse/significant other has smaller hands and is willing to ruin a manicure, let her reach into the tight spots with the towel.

9. Remove your protective plastic and wipe down the previously covered parts with a barely damp towel to get them looking like the rest of the engine. When you get this complete, your engine should look a lot better than it did before you started.

Last, after admiring your handiwork, I would suggest a little ArmorAll or Back to Black on the hoses and rubber trim that you just cleaned. Either of these products works great. Apply it by putting the product on a clean white

used sock and then wiping down the hoses/trim. This gets the product on where you want it as opposed to everywhere you don't. That all there is to it so have a go at it.

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