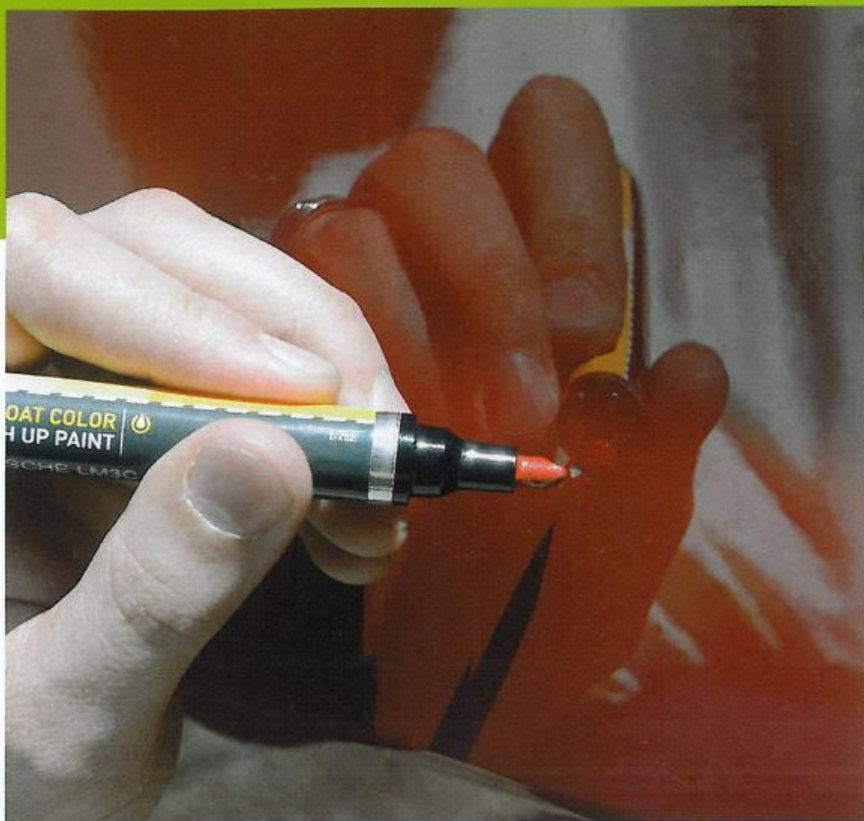




BETTER LOOKS

BY LARRY JEWETT
IMAGES BY MANUFACTURERS

You can make a case that the exterior paint truly works at the front line of your car.



1 The first step to getting the right paint is finding the paint code, often on the door. Automotive Touchup offers a locator service on the website for various makes.



2 This fender has some pretty good scratches on it, but nothing that a little time, effort and bottle-and-brush can't handle.

The threats are constant and many. Your car could be innocently sitting in the driveway when an acorn falls from a tree branch, bringing a slight ding in the paint. The car in front of you could kick up the smallest of stones or debris and your bumper now hosts imperfections. It's the little things that often bring the biggest issues.

Discerning car owners will tell you

that they are bugged by these slight imperfections. After all, countless hours have been spent, getting things just right to get the look you want. Now this? It's frustrating, but once you get over the aggravation, a little time and effort can put it all back like new again.

Companies such as Automotive Touchup have stepped up to help. They understand the importance of



3 Start by preparing the surface to be painted. Use a common household dish soap and wipe the area clean and dry.



4 Lightly touch the area to be painted with the brush from the bottle. You should have tested the product on a glossy sheet of paper or metal can before starting. Be sure to blend the strokes and apply the product in an even coat.



5 The two-ounce touchup bottle provides the basecoat, so a clearcoat will need to be added to finish the job.



6 After proper drying time, the surface scratches are no longer visible. With just a little effort, any car can have an improved appearance.

we own our cars longer these days, whether we're talking daily driver or our recreational pride and joy. We own them for practical reasons, but the quality of maintenance on any car speaks volumes about the owners' commitment to their wheels. What does yours say about you?

Small cosmetic repairs don't mean a trip to a body shop. In truth, many body shops have plenty to do with fender benders or special projects and a little job is not likely something they're in a hurry to take on. With the right tools and techniques, this is something that you can handle in your own driveway in a short amount of time. The benefits are immediate and the satisfaction is right there, right now.

As with all projects, a little research is a helpful tool. Automotive Touchup General Manager Paul Fernandez suggests customers visit their website, www.automotivetouchup.com, to become more familiar with the product. The site includes plenty of information, available at your fingertips. "We are geared toward the do-it-yourself owner," he said. "The website has plenty of how-to videos so you can see how it is done. There's a page of frequently asked questions with the answers. You can always call us and we'll help you as well."

The key to a perfect color match

starts with the vehicle's color code, long before the first application of the product. The trick, for those who are not overly familiar with the places to look, is finding it. That's where the website can again be very helpful. It can be a number of places, but a common location is on the door panel, usually driver's side, and it can be seen with the door open. This paint code serves as a critical component in Automotive Touchup's ability to provide an exact match for your needs.

Another consideration before starting is the amount of product you will need. "The size depends upon how much you want to do and that also determines which product you need," added Fernandez. "For the smaller jobs, the pen or the bottle and brush work well. Bigger jobs obviously require more." Something to keep in mind, from personal experience, it is better to have too much than not enough. Paint chips can be repaired on one area of the car, and within a short period of time, you may need the product elsewhere.

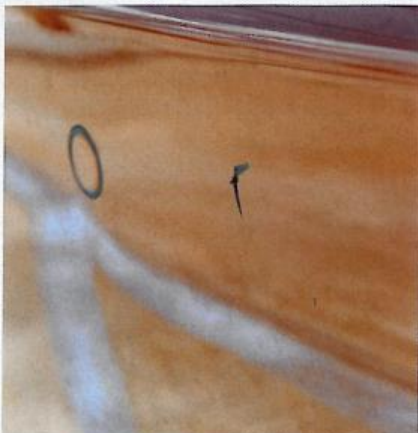
Once you make the decision and order the product, it's a good idea to practice your technique and get a good idea of the color. The best way to do this is to use a glossy sheet of paper or a metal can. Once you are sure of your ability and your color, you can

getting the right look and don't believe it should be "close enough". With over 200,000 paint formulations in current inventory (and growing), a perfect match is more important to them than any online dating service.

Their product offering runs the gamut from pens and small bottles for the little jobs to the quarts and gallons to bring back the sheen and luster that attracted you to the car in the first place. Our emphasis is on the small, everyday type of blemish, but you need to know your options when the time comes.

Studies have been showing that

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7 We've marked off some chip areas that are small enough to require only the paint pen. The pen can be used for areas that are the size of a pencil eraser or smaller.



8 Fill out the area where the imperfection can be found. A steady hand is a benefit, so get a comfortable stable stance when applying. It shouldn't take much time.



9 Make sure you cover the area completely. You can pull back the pen and make sure. If there are any questions or concerns, follow the instructions or view a video on the website.



10 The paint area will be a little soft for awhile, so avoid hard scrubbing. The pesky blemishes are a thing of the past. You'll be looking for more opportunity to use the product now that you have the hang of it.

move to the car. Automotive Touchup provides a test card with each order and you can also turn to the website for the how-to video on how to take full advantage of the color preview tool.

Automotive Touchup formulates their products to work together as part of a complete automotive paint system. Completing your touchup project with clearcoat is an essential finishing step – nail polish is NOT a good substitute for a real clearcoat. Applying product depends upon the size of the area. Smallest jobs, usually the size of a pencil eraser or smaller, require the pen application. Bottles will be your choice for areas that are about the size of a dime. A 12-ounce

aerosol can will cover a six square foot area. Larger projects mean bringing out the spray gun and higher amounts of product will be used.

Fernandez reports users taking their time and following directions have the best rate of success. "We have plenty of beginners who have applied the product with no problem. Since it is geared toward the D-I-Y market, anyone with a little confidence in their abilities and the desire to spend the time to do it right can be successful."

Once you are ready to paint, surface preparation is an important step in success. You can thoroughly clean the area with a household dish soap and water (This is the one time it's OK to use these products on your car's surface). These products remove wax, silicone and oils and the removal of these facilitates the adhesion process. Regular car soap can have a wax in it. Use prep solvent and a clean, lint-free towel on the area.

If primer is needed for the job (the directions for your product will let you know how to make this determination), use a plastic parts adhesion promoter on bare plastic or fiberglass. This step does not apply to pens and bottles. The use of primer requires three coats or more with each coat needing a 5-10 minute drying time.

Before applying basecoat,

thoroughly shake the product – pen, bottle or spray can. This would also be another opportunity to test the color on a panel, not the car. Once you are ready, apply several light coats rather than trying to oversaturate the area. Apply as many coats as necessary, again waiting out the 5-10 minute drying time. Once you are satisfied with your work, wait 30 minutes before applying clearcoat. You will be applying two to four coats, depending upon the job, and the wait time depends upon the application. You will wait 5-10 minutes on aerosol applications with the wait time for bottles and pens at 10-20 minutes. Be gentle when applying clearcoat to avoid compromising the basecoat. Clearcoat will be dry to the touch in 1-2 hours and completely dry overnight. For best results, wait one day before using any rubbing compound.

The conditions of application play a big role in success. For aerosol, the ideal temperature should be 70-80 degrees with humidity of 50 percent or lower. Application is best if not done in direct sunlight. If the project is done in a garage, be sure and have adequate ventilation.

After touchup, paint tends to be a little soft, so it is best not to do any hard scrubbing of the area. Solvents in wax can attack the clearcoat if curing time hasn't completed. Best

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results can be realized if the car isn't waxed for 30 days.

Some modern paint applications feature a Tri-Coat paint that has a "pearl" type luster to it. Automotive Touchup includes Tri-Coat matches in their inventory, but the application process is slightly different. "We handle it like the manufacturers do," said Fernandez. "You start with the primer, add the ground coat, then apply the mid-coat. There is a lot of bonder with a lot of pearl in there. You add the clearcoat to finish the process. We have found the best results come from using the aerosol and ready-to-spray products, but haven't had much complaint with pens."

The product is created on demand, so your shipment hasn't been sitting in a warehouse for a few months. "For 99 percent of the applications, we can find a two-stage formula," said Fernandez. "We can offer single stage, but that is by request only. The product is mixed on demand, which helps us make certain we can serve the customer."

While the company strives to make sure everything matches, there are mitigating circumstances that customers must keep in mind. For example, there's the age of the paint on which the touchup product is going. Putting fresh paint on a 40-year-old paint job might not develop the exact match you're looking for. Reasonable expectation often rests at the heart of the matter, but the Automotive Touchup technicians stand ready to help with any dissatisfied customer.

The formula for success is simple. Start small and go from there. The right paint code leads to the right product. The right steps in application lead to the greatest results. There is simply no reason to settle for stone chips and blemishes when a little time and effort can wipe them away in no time.

It's your car. What is it saying about you? 

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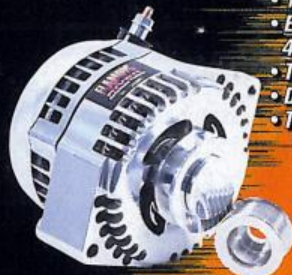
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