



CAR CARE SPECIALTIES, INC.

CAR COVERS

Car covers can help protect your car parked in the great outdoors from the damaging effects of ultraviolet radiation, acid rain, bird droppings, wind borne particles, sun fading, the claws of animals and even the prying eyes of thieves (let them guess as opposed to knowing). Inside your garage a quality cover provides a barrier against airborne dirt and foot borne varmints. (If it rains in your garage, you have problems that are not covered by this article.)

The use of a car cover is a double-edged sword, as they are both protective and possibly damaging. A cover that does not fit properly may be more damaging than no cover at all. If it is too loose, wind may cause it to flap against the paint, causing severe scratching. To obtain the best fit, order a cover that is custom fitted for your year and make of car. The "one size fits all" are cheaper, but will not provide the tight fit needed. If the car is not clean, the dirt trapped between the paint and the cover can also cause scratches as the cover is installed or removed or is moved around by the wind. The key to avoiding these problems is to put a proper fitting cover on a clean car. The best types have a bottom locking system that allows a plastic coated cable to hold the bottom of the cover snugly. This will help prevent wind movement of the cover and thieves from taking a peek.

Armed with the proper information, you may make an informed choice as to the advisability of using a car cover and the best type for your needs. There are three basic types; water proof, water resistant or "breathable" and non-water resistant. Each has its own advantages and problems. (And you thought only kids came with built-in problems.)

The waterproof car covers are usually plastic film or a plastic coated fabric and will keep the rain off your car, but will also trap condensation between the cover and your car. This trapped moisture may attack your paint with results that are worse than if you just left the car uncovered. The plastic type of car cover is useful if you store your car over the winter in a garage and use a flannel cloth cover against the surface and the plastic one as an outer protective shield. The flannel will wick off any moisture and the plastic adds a tough outer protective layer to help keep the varmints from nesting in the soft cloth. One manufacturer makes a giant "baggie" for your car called the Omni Bag. These are very useful if you store the car over the winter and wish to provide the extra level of protection gained from "sealing" the car. Place some desiccants in the bag to absorb excess moisture and seal your pride and joy for its winter hibernation. Another trick to protect any winter-stored car is to place mothballs around the exterior to discourage the rodents from moving in for the winter and dining on your insulation and wiring. Their gourmet appetites make for some interesting problems. One person had mice stuff the exhaust pipe with acorns. When he started the car in the spring, the resulting acorn shotgun blast dented his metal garage door. If you wish to rid yourself of the rodents, lay dishes of Instant Potato Buds and dishes of water around the outside of your car. They eat the Buds and drink the water and go KA-BOOM.

The second type of cover material, the water resistant or "breathable" type, is available in an almost bewildering array of fabrics, weights and types. These types of covers will repel most of the water yet allow air to circulate, preventing condensation. Most have ultraviolet screens woven into the mesh to help them withstand sunlight degradation and are usually mildew resistant. The lightest weight car cover currently available is made from Tyvek. This cover weighs about 3 pounds and is very easy to put on and take off. Tyvek is very water resistant and sheds most of the water, yet is so light that the wind will tend to beat the cover against the finish. Unless care is taken to insure that this type of cover is fitted very tightly, it may beat your paint into submission. Tyvek covers lend themselves for very short-term use, such as daily use in the office parking lot. Evolution by Kimberly Clark is a multi-layer "waffle pattern" cover that offers great protection from the elements, available in numerous colors, and is thick enough to help soften the blow of door dings. For outside use, custom fitted Evolution covers offer the best protection. The downside is they are heavy, difficult to put on and take off and if the paint surface is not clean, they may tend to scratch the surface. If you are storing a car outside for long periods of time, this may be the best choice. Another type of composite cover uses a clothing style breathable nylon or polyester outer layer with a foamed acrylic inner lining. This combination is not that water resistant, it instead "filters" the water, allowing only "clean water" to reach the surface. This filtering process, in my humble opinion, only removes the gross dirt. It does not remove the acid from acid rain (unless there is a tiny chemical factory inside the cover that no one has told me about). These types of covers are usually lighter, thus easier to install/remove, than the Evolution type and may be more suited for short-term use. There are a multitude of other "filtering" materials available, such as rip-stop nylon, synthetic sail cloth and boat canvas. Most of these are found on the relatively inexpensive one-size fits all type of mass-market covers and may not be that suitable.

The third major type of cover material is 100% cotton or cotton/polyester blends available in a flannel style or regular cloth style. I prefer the 100% cotton, as the polyester fibers may scratch the paint. These are not water resistant and should not be used outside for long periods of time. For indoor use, the 100% cotton flannel cover is the most gentle on the paint and probably the best choice. The flannel lining may cause lint balls on your canvas cabriolet top (automotive fur balls?), so you may consider a plain cotton cover for your Cabrio. If you store your car over the winter, or drive your pride and joy infrequently, a 100% cotton cover may be a wise investment.

One of the tricks to installing/removing a car cover is to roll the cover on and off the car. The first step is to place the cover on the car in position, but not hooked under the car. Take the driver's side one third of the cover and fold it over the top of the car towards the passenger side, so the fold runs along the edge of the top, hood, and trunk. You will find that the roof is usually one third of the cover and the

sides are each a one third. Fold the passenger side third of the cover over the driver's side section, so you now have three layers of cover over the roof, hood and trunk. Start rolling at either the trunk or hood end and roll the cover up with out moving the cover. Walk along the car as you roll up the cover. This way, you have minimized the movement/scratching of the car cover as you remove it. To install, just reverse the process and unroll along the car and fold down the sides.

Car cover care is simple, and usually involves cleaning it periodically. Read your cover's directions carefully. Most may be washed in the washing machine with a mild detergent and no fabric softener. Dry thoroughly according to the manufacturer's directions. No car cover should be stored wet. If it is removed wet, dry as soon as possible. Solvents, such as gasoline, etc. will usually eat holes in your cover. Most are not that happy if they are draped on hot exhaust pipes, they tend to melt and leave a gooey mess that is a thrill to clean.

If you have any questions or if you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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