

Under Pressure, Part I

When Neither Too Little nor Too Much Will Do

By Kevin Farrell

Proper buffing involves many nuances and variables, ranging from technique, buffer speed, pad type, products, type of paint, and more. However, one variable that often gets overlooked — but is extremely critical in buffing — is *pressure*. More specifically, it is the amount of pressure needed on the buffer to buff a paint surface to perfection. It is true that all the other variables mentioned will make a big difference in the level of perfection, but exerted pressure is one of the more overlooked, yet very important issues to understand when buffing.

A LOT OF PRESSURE OR A LITTLE?

Too much or too little pressure can be bad. Obviously, too much pressure will lead more quickly to swirl marks, hazing, and cloudiness, or possibly burned paint. Too little pressure will basically

do nothing more than smear the product around a bit faster than what you could do by hand.

I see many detailers exerting very little pressure when they buff. They may demonstrate good technique with regard to holding the buffer correctly and moving it along well, but because they use too little pressure while buffing, the results are less than perfect.

I realize there is a certain amount of fear that some detailers experience while using a high-speed buffer. They have heard or seen all the bad things that can happen and are deathly afraid of burning the paint or creating deep swirl marks that are very unsightly. Because of this fear, they will use insufficient pressure to get the job done. Or, they may compensate for the lack of pressure by using extremely aggressive buffing pads and products. You may think that this will even everything out and still create a perfect finish. However, with more aggressive

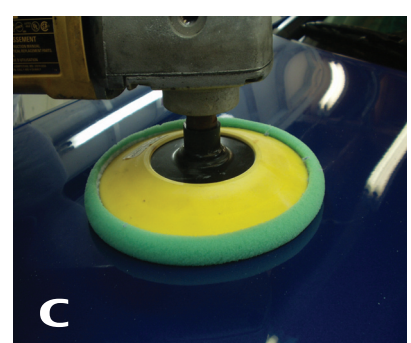
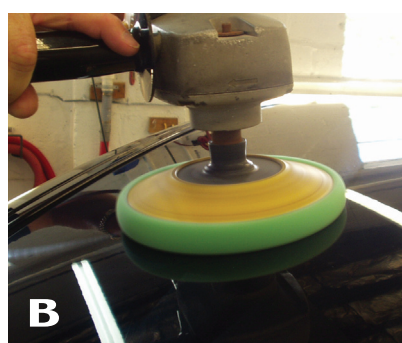
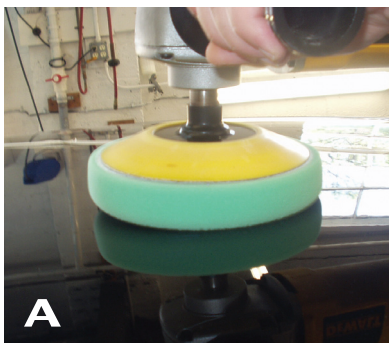
pads and products, there will generally be more dusting, more of a mess, the possibility of deeper swirl marks and cloudiness in the paint, and more time spent on the vehicle in the attempt to gain the same results.

WHAT IS THE RIGHT PRESSURE?

Knowing how to exert the correct pressure and when and where you need more or less pressure is intuitive — a *feel* that will develop with experience. Also, seeing the paint corrections take place, and how fast or slow they happen is also a key to pressure exertion. Most buffing techniques, pads, products, etc. will create a shine on the paint surface, but an absolute perfect paint surface is created not only by a good gloss, but also when proper paint correction is taking place.

Everybody has his or her own theories on buffing techniques.

BUFFER PRESSURE




Too much, too little, or just right. Which description fits which picture? Can you pick out the telltale signs? Look for the answers in the March issue of Auto Laundry News.

Some people are fans of higher speed and more aggressive products and buffing pads to get the job done. I am a fan, however, of mid-range products and much lower speed to accomplish the same thing. I never want to be overly aggressive with my choice of pads, products, or speed if I do not have to be. I can always grab a more aggressive pad or a more aggressive product if all else fails.

My goal is always to limit the number of buffing steps needed to create a beautiful paint finish. Also, by limiting my use of a very aggressive buffing pad and product, it generally takes fewer steps to finish the buffing process and makes for an easier time doing so. I will simply make the product more or less aggressive by varying the amount of pressure I am using. I can regulate this aggressiveness by pressure alone.

PRESSURE EQUATES TO TIME SPENT

Many detailers I speak with tell me it takes them an inordinate amount of time to buff the car. There are generally two reasons for this. First, I see many detailers being overly aggressive with their products and their pads. This leads to *over-correction* of the paint and leaves the finish with deep swirl marks, lots of cloudiness and hazing, which will take multiple steps to remove. The second reason for spending too much time buffing is that they are simply not getting the imperfections out with their style of buffing. I see many detailers who keep going over and over an area multiple times without great results. Often the product or pad is not at fault, but the lack of pressure while buffing is.

So what can you look for to figure out the amount of pressure you are exerting when you buff? There are several indicators that will help guide you to the right amount of pressure. We will examine them in detail in next month's issue of *Auto Laundry News*. 

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