Glossworks Ultimate DIY Guide to Ceramic Coating: How to Protect and Enhance Your Vehicle's Shine & Value

Are you tired of your car losing its shine soon after a wash? Do you want to protect and enhance your vehicle's appearance? Look no further! Welcome to "The Ultimate Guide" where we will walk you through the process of giving your vehicle that long-lasting, head-turning shine.

In this comprehensive guide, we will demystify the world of ceramic coating, a revolutionary technology that offers unparalleled protection for your vehicle's paintwork. Whether you're dealing with environmental contaminants such as brake dust and pollution, or UV, bird droppings, or even minor scratches, ceramic coatings act as a shield against them all.

In this guide we will also delve into the best techniques for applying ceramic coating for you DIYers, how Glossworks prepares your vehicles surface for optimal results for you to follow, and how you can maintain that look for years to come.

Enhancing & protecting your car's shine has never been easier, thanks to vehicle ceramic coatings. So, join us on this journey to discover the secrets behind this advanced technology and unlock the potential of your vehicle's appearance!

Steps needed to prepare your vehicle for ceramic coating.

Before applying ceramic coating, it is crucial to prepare your vehicle's surface to ensure optimal results. Here are the basic steps Glossworks follow:

1. **Wash your car:** We start by thoroughly washing your car to remove any dirt, grime, or contaminants. In general, a pH-neutral car shampoo is recommended for the use on all paint work, but at this stage a ‘stripping’ cleanser is commonly used and a microfiber wash mitt to avoid scratching the paintwork further.
2. **Decontamination:** After washing, it's important we remove any embedded contaminants from the surface. A ‘clay media’ along with a clay lubricant is used by gently gliding this over the paintwork. This process dislodges bonded contaminants like tar, tree sap, and industrial fallout, leaving the surface smooth and ready for coating. Many times, chemical decontamination is needed, targeting these individual marks. Iron Remover to remove iron from brakes; Solvents for paint or tar; and surfactants and solvents for tree sap and bugs.
3. **Paint correction:** If your car has any swirl marks, scratches, holograms, or oxidation, it is recommended to perform a paint correction process before applying *any* ceramic coating. This involves using an abrasive substance such as compounds and polishers with machine polisher to remove or reduce these imperfections, restoring the paint's clarity and smoothness. Due to the thickness of paints, there are limits to the number of times this can be done before paint is ‘burned through’. Paint correction is much like sandpaper, but very fine abrasives are used in excess of 10000 grit. Incorrect use of polishers or polishing too often will ‘burn though’ the clear coat of your vehicles paint. However, used correctly ‘Paint correction’ ensures the best possible results and enhances the appearance of the ceramic coating. A side note on this: Because polishing removes physical paint, ceramic coating is one of the best methods to retain, and build upon, your clear coat and colour coat paint layers.
   Pro Tip: It is possible to use an orbital hand sander to polish your paint, with the right tools.

4. **Surface preparation:** Once the paint correction is complete, it's important to thoroughly clean the surface again to remove any residue from the polishing process. We use a specialty ‘panel wipe’ for the ceramic process, though many detailers across the globe use a standard DIY solution for this to good effect and at around 5% that ours cost. This is usually a straight mix of Isopropyl Alcohol and Pure distilled water. If you don’t already have these, then I would recommend buying the correct panel wipe. The use of this is to ensure the surface is completely clean and free from any oils, waxes, or polish residue.

This step is considered crucial to ensure proper bonding of the ceramic coating maximizing its effectiveness and longevity.

DIY – Pros vs Cons

Don’t be fooled, Ceramic Coatings are typically not for the first timer! But we are here to help you succeed, but it helps to be informed.

Pros:

1. **Cost-effective:** Applying ceramic coating yourself can save you considerable money compared to paying for professional services. Ceramic coatings are readily available from Glossworks, and we are happy to guide you through the process.
2. **Flexibility:** DIY application allows you to do the coating when and where it suits you best. You can work at your own pace and take breaks as needed. This is not recommended when part way through the coating process itself. Finish the full coat over the entirety of the vehicle before resting. Some coatings also need a limited time between applications like layering Gtechniq Exo over Crystal Serum Light.
3. **Satisfaction:** There is a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in doing the job yourself. Taking the time and effort to protect and enhance your vehicle's appearance can be a rewarding experience. I do it all the time so I know this well.
   Pro Tip: Not all YouTube videos are good reference material, but Glossworks will help with this.

Cons:

1. **Skill and experience**: Applying most ceramic coatings requires a certain level of skill and experience to achieve optimal results. It involves meticulous attention to detail, proper technique and expensive tools, as well as knowledge of the specific product and process needed for that chemistry.
2. **Time-consuming:** DIY application can be time-consuming, especially if you are not familiar with the process. It requires careful preparation, sometimes multiple layers of coating, and curing time between each layer. And if doing paint correction prior to coating, this time can be in excess of 8+ hours, though the coating can be completed in as little as 2 hours.
3. **Risk of mistakes:** Without proper knowledge and technique, there is a risk of making mistakes during the application process. These mistakes can affect the effectiveness and durability of the coating and will almost definitely result in sub-par looks with “high spots”. Though we try to arm you with as much knowledge prior to starting on the DIY journey, as well as having beginner friendly coatings.
   Pro Tip: “High spots” are a term to describe coating that has built up higher than the rest of the coating, resulting in smears. These smears may need to be polished out, or possibly even sanded.

Common misconceptions about ceramic coating

There are several misconceptions surrounding ceramic coatings with some of these myths coming from the industry or from sales people. Let's debunk some of the most common ones that we hear:

1. **Ceramic coatings make a car scratch-proof:** While ceramic coatings provide an additional layer of protection and reduce the likelihood minor scratches and swirl marks and are often harder than the paint, they do not make a vehicle scratch-proof. Sharp objects, abrasive materials or even 'correct' washing methods can still cause damage to the coating and the paintwork beneath it if even only very slight. Think about the screen protector on your phone, does that have scratches?
2. **Ceramic coatings are permanent:** Ceramic coatings are long-lasting but not permanent. Over time, the coating will gradually wear off due to exposure to the elements and regular washing. However, with proper care and maintenance, the coating can last for several years. If you're wondering about "lifetime" coatings, think about all the peeling paint you see on cars in the region. If paint is bonded to the car permanently at the factory, but can still peel off over time, how long do you really think a lifetime coating can last when applied after the fact?
3. **Ceramic coatings eliminate the need for washing:** While ceramic coatings make it easier to clean your vehicle and reduce the frequency of washing, they do not eliminate the need for regular maintenance. Washing is still necessary to remove dirt, road grime, traffic film, and contaminants that can accumulate on the coating's surface. Like washing dishes with just cold water, there will always be grime and dirt that you need a 'soap' to remove.
4. **Ceramic coatings can be applied to any surface*:*** Many Ceramic coatings are designed specifically for automotive paintwork. They should not be applied to other surfaces such as glass, plastic, or chrome unless the product is explicitly formulated for those materials. And even when designed for other surfaces, these coating applications have a MUCH shorter life (Tyres -6 months, Leather – 6 months, Glass – 12-18 months).
   Pro Tip: **Tesla Cyber Trucks also benefit from ceramic coatings as these trucks will rust.**
5. **Ceramic coatings can be applied once and forgotten:** To maintain the coating's effectiveness, periodic inspections and maintenance are required. Over time, the coating may require reapplication to ensure optimal protection and shine. All coatings have a limited life, usually measured years, rarely in decades or lifetimes.
   Pro Tip: The longest life we have seen that we trust is around 25 years, but costs much more than a normal pro coating!

It is important to have realistic expectations about ceramic coatings and understand their limitations. While they offer significant benefits, they are not a magical solution that will completely protect your vehicle from all forms of damage. Knowing these things makes you an informed consumer, and hopefully a happy customer of Glossworks.

Frequently asked questions about ceramic coating

1. **What are the benefits of ceramic coating?** Ceramic coatings offer a protective layer that shields paint from UV rays, scuffs, chemicals, and dirt. They also make washing and drying easier due to their hydrophobic properties.
2. **How long does a ceramic coating last?** Durability varies depending on the product, application, and maintenance. High-quality coatings, professionally applied, can last several years with proper care with most coatings having a life of 3-5 years, but some coatings can last much longer than that.
3. **Can I apply ceramic coating myself?** DIY application products exist, but the process requires careful paint preparation and following specific instructions. Professional application is recommended for best results.
4. **What is the difference between ceramic coating and wax?** Ceramic coatings bond to the paint, offering superior protection and longevity compared to waxes, which provide a temporary layer of protection.
5. **How do I maintain a ceramic coated car?** Use gentle washing techniques, pH-neutral soaps, and avoid harsh chemicals or abrasive cleaners. Maintain a regular washing routine to prevent contaminant buildup. These are the same products and processes that should be used when cleaning even an un-coated vehicle.
6. **Will a ceramic coating hide existing scratches?** No, most ceramic coatings won't hide scratches. Paint correction (polishing) is usually needed before applying a ceramic coating for a flawless finish. However some products such as Gtechniq Crystal Serum ultra are designed to fill some very minor imperfections.
7. **Can I ceramic coat my wheels and windows?** Yes, specific ceramic coatings are available for wheels and glass as well as many other surfaces, offering protection from brake dust, road grime, and water spots.
8. **How much does a ceramic coating cost?** Costs depend on vehicle size, coating quality, and professional application vs. DIY. Prices typically range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars just in product cost. For DIY expect a minimum of around $200, and for professional installations expect a minimum of $1000.
9. **Are there any drawbacks to ceramic coating?** The upfront cost can be higher compared to waxes. Additionally, improperly applied coatings can be difficult to remove. But besides these, no drawbacks in normal situations.
10. **Who should I trust to apply a ceramic coating?** Easy - Glossworks.