

How Do You Clean and Protect A Convertible Top?

Throughout the history of the ragtop convertible, there have been few products designed to address the environmental factors that nature and man places on fabric and vinyl convertible tops.

The number one concern for convertible tops is acid rain, along with UV rays, smog, tree sap, bird droppings, salt, tar, dirt, grease and grit. All of these environmental elements must be removed to keep fabric and vinyl convertible tops looking showroom new.

Although convertible top fabric does not promote mildew growth by itself, mildew may develop on dirt and other foreign substances that are not removed. This is especially true in warm, humid, dark environments. A program of keeping the fabric clean through regular washings, **before** it gets dirty, will enhance the life and beauty of the acrylic and make successive cleanings easier.

In time, convertible tops tend to become deficient from acidic environmental pollution, mildew and dirt, which can cause serious damage to fabric and vinyl tops. Automobile owner's manuals recommend a regular program of cleaning your convertible top. They point out that cleaning is the only way to minimize the impact of a multitude of environmental factors contributing to ragtop deterioration. Without regular washings and the protection of a fluorocarbon rewater repelling system, convertible tops become stiff and will have a loss of color and water repellency.

Most automatic car washes will not harm cloth top fabrics. Washes with water jets and hanging cloths provide a more gentle cleaning action. Those using heavy barrel brushes, however, could damage the top material. Haartz and R+S (OEM), the world's leading manufacturers of virtually every American and European convertible automobile fabric topping recommends hand washing whenever possible. Do not use detergent under any circumstances. Bird and tree droppings, as well as other loose particles should be removed immediately. Initial cleaning should be done with a vacuum with a brush attachment. Afterward, rinse thoroughly with water to remove loose particle soils. This will also prevent the soils from being

redeposited during the cleaning process. Once the fabric has been rinsed thoroughly, spray an all-natural convertible top cleaner evenly over the entire surface while still wet. Allow the convertible top cleaner to soak for 10 to 20 minutes and then scrub lightly with a soft nylon brush or terry cloth rag. Rinse thoroughly, preferable until no remaining soap foam is observed. Additional cleanings may be required. It's best to determine the need for additional cleanings after the fabric has dried completely.

Washing with a mild dish soap and warm water is a safe alternative to a professional top cleaner, but not as **effective**.

For more stubborn cases, Haartz recommends a solution of not more than ½ cup (4 oz) bleach and ¼ cup of Wolfsteins RAGGTOPP Cleaner per gallon of water, soak for approximately 20 minutes and scrub lightly as indicated above. Only use bleach as necessary, as excessive soaking with the bleach solution can deteriorate seam threads. Rinse thoroughly to prevent streaking to prevent streaking on painted and chrome surfaces. Several cleanings may be necessary. Once dry, cleaning should be followed by application of a water repellent/protectant. Failure to apply will result in rapid resoiling of the unprotected fabric.

Convertible tops are woven textiles made from a wide variety of synthetic fibers, acrylic, polyester, olefin and various blends including cotton. The breathable fabrics are made "water repellent" by a chemical treatment process during manufacturing. The treated fabric repels (beads) water, resists soiling both water and oil based stains and impedes mildew formation. With time and use the original repellency treatment is diminished, making periodic cleaning and retreatment necessary.

The Haartz Corporation exclusively recommends using RAGGTOPP Protectant to provide a richer appearance and to restore water and stain repellency to convertible tops. The elements of nature and man are sealed out while allowing fabric tops to breathe and repel water at the same time.

Use of a water repellent is generally not necessary with vinyl tops as the material is naturally more repellent than fabric. Take extra care when cleaning vinyl tops not to scrub off the grain pattern of the vinyl, as this may weaken or damage the convertible top.

Over three million convertible automobiles are on the road today. Sales trends for new convertibles have been on a steady rise since 1989 (about 12% per year) Convertible tops and plastic windows, the most coveted parts of the convertible are going untouched by professional detailers and high-end car washes.