

Refurbishing the headlights

A quick guide on how to refurbish your headlights if they are badly stone-chipped and/or the lacquer is peeling.

Tools:

800grit sandpaper

1500grit sandpaper

Autosol silver polish

Brasso

Meguiars ScratchX or PlastX

Light car shampoo solution (as a lubricant)

Lots of clean rags

Masking tape

Process (for plastic lenses only):

1. Use liberal amounts of masking tape and mask around the headlights so as not to scratch the paint when you go at it with the sandpaper.
2. Attack the headlights with the 800grit sandpaper. Be sure to wet it with the car shampoo solution as a lubricant. Most plastic lenses will have a layer of lacquer this is the layer that gets yellow. You need to sand ALL of this lacquer off (takes quite a while). Your lenses will look all cloudy and messed up. Don't panic!
3. Once you've got all the lacquer off (when the lenses dry, the surface looks even without any darker patches), go at it with the 1500 grit sandpaper. Be sure to cover the entire area till the surface is as smooth as possible. The lenses should be clear now.
4. The lenses will still be cloudy after the sandpaper. Now attack it with the Autosol. You will see the lenses start to clear up. Use the Autosol until it doesn't get any clearer. Basically you are grinding off the top layer of plastic and moving from rougher to finer grit material.
5. Then use the Brasso on the lenses. They should be almost completely clear now. In fact, your arms will be about ready to fall off at this point and you should be telling yourself that after the Brasso should be about good enough. But don't stop.
6. Finally, use the ScratchX or PlastX (preferred). The lenses should be completely cleaned up and clear and smooth to the touch after this step. All your scratches should be gone, along with all but the deepest stone chips. Voila, new headlights at the cost of elbow grease!

Additional tip - steps 4, 5 & 6 go a lot quicker if you use a buffing machine.