

DIY

HOW TO PREP & PAINT YOUR CLASSIC CHEVY WRITTEN BY BRIAN GRABER

Here is a quick guide on how to get your classic Chevy from bare metal prep to the last coat of clear. We will go over types of fillers and different grits of paper we prefer and work well for our applications. Then to a good solid base for your new paint job with your epoxy's and primers. Finally we will go into wet sanding, paint prep, and spraying your new wonderful color and clear.

As we all know everyone's favorite part is coming up, sanding and more sanding. First comes good metal prep. If you are starting with a sand blasted body and panels, or one of Woody's new bodies and new panels; it is good to start with prepping and filling the body

seams or any weld seams from patching up a panel. We like to use fiberglass base filler for the body seams and all welded seams; it makes for a strong base for your polyester based fillers or what a lot of us call bondo. This will also help with your fillers not showing a line where repairs have been made. Prepping for your fiberglass is an easy step; take a small grinding disk, 36 grit works very well for the fiberglass to bite to. Grind the area around the seam or weld, be sure not to grind too much here, if you see a lot of sparks you may need to back off a little bit. Now your metal is prep for your fiberglass filler. Mix up the amount of filler you need and apply to your prepped metal.



It is now time for some sanding, 40 to 80 grit works well for sanding the fiberglass fillers. Don't be afraid to pull out the dual action sander (DA) or air fileboard, it makes things go a little quicker. Once you are done sanding, it is time to add some polyester filler, just to finish smoothing the areas where the fiberglass filler might be or just a small dent. Getting these areas prepped using 80 grit on a DA works well on your sand blasted part and even a new part that may have a small stamping mark you want to smooth out.

Times up, your filler is dry and ready to sand. We prefer starting with 80 grit, but you can use 40 grit to get your first cut. Sanding the polyester filler with a hand boardfile is typically what we do since it's more likely going to be sanded flatter than with a DA. After you have your panels nice and smooth with the 80 grit, it is time to switch to 180 grit paper. Before you start sanding with your 180 grit, it is a good time to check for small pin holes and small low spots on these areas a polyester glaze works very well. It is time to use the 180 grit. After your glaze has dried, sand the 80 grit scratches out and your glazed spots down to a smooth finish.

One last step before we are ready for a first good prime, it's the scuffing and final panel prep. Eighty grit on a DA to bare metal and 180 grit on a DA to E-coated metal works well for primer adhesion. Red scuff pads are what you are after now, they are close to 400 grit. Take the scuff pad to any and all areas of the panel that have not been sanded, mainly applies for new panels coating. Now you are ready for your first prime.

Fig. 1 - Here you see our 56 wagon fresh from the blaster and Billy Wooten starting on the body work. As you can see the body seam below the taillight has been prepped and ready for filler. Fig. 2 - Fitting parts on your car at this stage and make a big difference at the end with fit and finish. From taillight like you see Billy fitting here, or drilling holes for emblems and trim. Fig. 3 - Epoxy is what's going on. Billy puts a nice coat of epoxy down on the blasted body before the first coat of primer. Fig. 4 - The final once over before final prime. Brian Graber is scuffing the door jam to ensure good adhesion. Fig. 5 - Looks like Billy is enjoying sanding primer. As you can see on the roof; smoothing out the final little spot with glazing filler before second prime. Fig. 6 - Here is Brian wet sanding the roof to an even finish and all guide coat is gone. With the guide coat sanded away, this should mean your panels are pretty flat and smooth. Fig. 7 Taping the body up for paint and checking the body over one last time.





Fig. 8 - On this car we went with Spies Hecker paint. With their waterborne line of basecoats and quality clear. Fig. 9 - Mixing of the basecoat and reducer need to be right with waterborne basecoats so flash times and coverage is good and timely. So take your time and make sure your mixers are right for your application. Fig. 10 - Brian is adding activator to the base coat for the two tone. Spies recommends adding the activator to the first color to go down for proper adhesion and so your tape does not pull off your first color. Fig. 11 - Now mixing the final piece of the puzzle, clear. When mixing clear make sure your hardener is right for the temperature. The slower or the hotter temperature the hardener the longer your clear will flow and lay out smooth.

Put that sanding block down and pick up that primer gun. At this point the car or panels are in the spray booth, dust free and wiped down with a good pre-cleaner wash. For the start of a first good prime, we will be spraying an epoxy primer on all of the bare metal places on the body and panels. Why an epoxy? Well a lot of your 2K primers are not made to go straight over bare metal. So that is where the epoxy comes in, they are made to bite into bare metal for a stronger bond. After you have sprayed your epoxy, one good coat is all you need. With the right flash time between coats, it is time for your 2K primer.

Three medium wet coats on the body and panel is a good build for the next step. Now that the newly primed parts have sat for a few days, it is time for some more block sanding. Using a good guide coat on the primed panels can help you find where there still might be some small imperfections when block sanding. This step of sanding can be done with 180 grit sand paper on the sanding block. When you have all of the guide coat sanded, scuffed, and a missed ding here or there smoothed out, it is time to put those pieces into the second and final prime. You can repeat and prime everything three times if you choose. Just remember to scuff the areas the block sanding did not get. If there are no type of scratches for your primer to bite into, it may flake off or bubble up after time.

Get that bucket of nice clean soapy water; it is time for some wet sanding. Just remember you will be seeing color soon and your grey days will be coming to an end. So pull back out that guide coat for the last time on these panels and give them a nice even coat. Get those sanding blocks back out but this time you will want to use 400 grit sand paper. You can use 320 grit to 600 grit, just check with your sealer or paint manufacturer recommendations. You will be sanding the panels wet and the more you keep it wet the smoother the panel will be. If you come to a spot while you are wet sanding with a pin hole or two, do not sweat it. Take some of your glazing filler and use a razor blade as a mini spreader, it will fill in the small pin holes, and you can just simply wet sand them out.

It is time for your final prep before you paint. Go through and double check all the guide coat is sanded and scuffed away. Be sure the body and panels are dry and dust free. After you have everything you do not want paint on taped off, it is time for the parts to be wiped down with a good quality pre-clear spray or pre-cleaner towel. Then it's on to the tack cloth, which should get any small hairs and dirt off the panels.

Time to start spraying. Before any color goes on, I like



to put a medium wet coat of sealer on all parts, this helps with the colors going on evenly and helps lock down any spot that might have been sanded through. After your sealer has flashed off; fifteen to twenty minutes is normal for most sealers, take your tack cloth to the panels gently to get any dirt that might be on top. Dust free, it is time for the first coat of color. Two to three coats of color or until covered with solid colors, and two to three coats or until covered plus a control coat for metallic and pearls. Remember to tack your panels between each coat of color to help make a cleaner paint job in the end. The light at the end of the tunnel is coming. Color is on and has had the right amount of flash time, a quick once over with the tack cloth, and we are on to the clear. I like to put three good coats of clear on bodies and panels, any more than that the clear does not lay down and slick.

Fig. 12 - Here we have Brian spraying the second color of the two tone. It is best to start with your lighter color first so it will take fewer coats to cover with the second color. Fig. 13 - Make sure to get complete color and clear coverage all the way around window and door openings. This will make for nice clean edges after your interior trim is put on. Fig. 14 - In this picture you can see the door hanging while being painted instead of being laid flat. Keeping your panels in the same orientation they will be bolted to the car will make for a better match for your colors. Helps more with metallics and pearls more and solid colors. Fig. 15 - Now after you unmask your two tone it is time for clear. Spraying your two tone basecoats before clear will help smooth out the tape line. Fig. 16 - Time to pull off the tape and masking paper: step back and take a look at what you have done. From bare metal to a nice shiny car. Just shows what a little hard work can get you.

It's now time to step back and take it all in. At the beginning of this process you may feel like you don't get anywhere fast, but when it is all said and done you can say your hard work has paid off, and you can be proud of what you have done. I hope this can put you on the right track for your build. 

