

Preparing for a Car Show



American Collectors Insurance

With much of the country waking up from what seemed like an unusually long winter, it's no surprise that the thoughts of many automotive collectors and enthusiasts are turning towards [car shows](#). This can mean anything from those open-enrollment Saturday mornings to the judged events that often blur the line between "car show" and "concoors". No matter what you're looking forward to this summer, we have some tips to help you make the most of those wonderful weekends.

Getting it Started



If you did any winterizing since last car season, now's the time to get that reversed. Depending on the era and manufacturer of your classic, that can mean everything from a complete fluid replacement and chassis grease service to simply unplugging your battery maintainer. Unless you're running synthetic oil, it's worth taking a moment to calculate the age of what's in your sump. Conventional motor oils break down by time, as well as, by mileage unless you never started and ran the car after doing the oil change, in which case you've simply exchanged a can for a pan and shouldn't see any degradation until the oil is exposed to combustion by-products.

What's next? Starting the engine. If you want to reduce startup wear after storage to an absolute minimum, and if your battery is strong enough, consider removing the sparkplug wires (or switching off the ignition, if you have a race car) and running the engine just on the starter for a few ten-to-thirty-second bursts. This will get some oil out of the sump and onto the bearing surfaces before the full pressure of combustion. Once you're satisfied that there's oil flowing throughout the engine, you can engage spark and start for real.

How long should you run the engine for, and under what conditions? Ideally you want to get the coolant (if applicable) and oil up to operating temperature. This will get rid of some oil contaminants and expose any leaks that may have cropped up over the winter. If possible, do a test run on a similar route that you'll be taking to your first show. With very few exceptions, that's better than just idling it for ten minutes – and you'll have a little peace of mind, as well.

If possible, refill the tank with ethanol-free gasoline, or fortify the fuel with your additive of choice, during or after the drive.

Clean and Clear



Pre-show detailing routines, in our experience, tend to be about 20% related to the requirements of the show and about 80% related to the fastidiousness of the owner in question. If it's a judged show where cleanliness is one of the criteria, then make sure you're prepared to address whatever happens on the way to the show. Does that mean you need a trunk full of distilled water? Not always – but make sure you

have enough clean towels on hand to avoid a situation where you're reusing a towel that could have dirt embedded in the fibers.

For non-judged shows where you just want your classic to look nice, wash the car from the top to the bottom, be sparing with the tire dressing, and remember to polish your exhaust tips, if applicable. Two techniques that have become popular with even casual enthusiasts are paint clay and ceramic coating. Used together, they can put a glassy, smooth-touch shine on your finish – but remember that paint clay *is* an abrasive, and that you can't use it constantly, any more than you could use rubbing compound and a buffer.

One overlooked aspect of detailing: clean glass! Whether you want to show off a restored interior or just have as much shine on the windows as you do on the paint, it's worth cleaning the glass before you leave and again once you arrive.

Sign Display



If you're not a gregarious or talkative person, consider making a display sign listing salient features of your car. These can make a difference to showgoers, many of whom can also be a bit shy when it comes to asking questions. Your sign should include basic information including, year, make, model of your vehicle, and a few tidbits about production numbers, special features, or aspects of your car that are unique.

If you prefer no one opening your car, sitting in it, or touching it, a properly chosen sign can go a long way towards preventing unwanted interactions. This is one case

where it doesn't pay to be particularly witty; a simple "Please look, do not touch", or "Please ask before opening the doors", should do the trick. The sign can simple be taped to the outside of the window above the doorhandle, and this should catch the attention of most.

The Best Seat in the House

Try to bring a comfortable folding chair. Although, you may think you'll spend the show walking around looking at other cars, it helps to be prepared should that not be the case. Another item to bring for precautionary purposes is an umbrella. Even if the weather looks perfect, it can keep you out of the sun on a hot day. You'll enjoy the show much more with these simple items on hand.

Parking Tastefully

If bad weather does occur, make certain you can get back up the hill, or across the grass, you traversed to get to your chosen parking spot. Obviously, this is more of a concern for lowriders than it is for vintage Jeeps, but you'd be surprised how many simply wonderful parking spots are treacherous to exit after a bit of rain.

Ship It or Drive It?



Except for relatively rare shows where driving to the event is a mandatory part of the entry, there's nothing wrong with opting to tow or ship your car to the show. Better to be safe should something happen if you choose to drive to a show.

Consider a period-appropriate tow rig, mechanically refurbished to do the job both on the way to the show and once you're there.

Five Take-Alongs for Every Show

The following items fit into a small bag and will improve your car-show experience tremendously:

- A portable jump-starter (in case a door gets left open, or an aging battery doesn't enjoy the weather)
- The right lug wrench for your car (to help with a loose wheel or flat tire)
- Glass cleaner
- Quick detailer
- Microfiber towels

With all the above handled, there's just one thing left to do: *Enjoy the show!* We'll see you out there.