

Step 3. Primer

After all high areas and filled areas have been water-sanded to proper contour with 220 grit paper, all sanded areas should be primed. This is best done by an experienced painter.

Choose Your Primer

Primer selection requires careful planning. Each material used must be able to adhere to the base material under it. We recommend that you use a two-part sanding primer that does not require air drying and does not shrink after curing. Most catalyzed polyester primers will adhere well to a fiberglass or polyester filler base. (As with filler, be sure to use the recommended catalyst for your primer). Polyester primers and fillers are incompatible with self-etching primers. Never use a self-etching primer over a polyester primer, polyester body filler, or fiberglass! Also, never use a polyester primer or body filler over self-etching primer. Check the primer manufacturer's recommendations for use and incompatibilities for any other type of two-part catalyzed primer.

High Areas

Be careful when you primer over an area that was high, particularly if you are not priming the surrounding area. The primer adds thickness, and you may just end up sanding it all off again unless you are careful to feather in the edges of the primed area.

Pinholes

Sometimes small air bubbles will come through the primer and burst, causing pinholes. This often occurs when you primer over filler or over areas where you have sanded through the gelcoat. If pin holing occurs, primer can be brushed, squeegeed, or "gun putty" to fill the holes. (To "gun putty" set your paint gun on narrow fan, and blow primer into the holes). Once again we want to caution you against using an air-dry material for this operation because of secondary shrinkage.

Sand it All Again

Now you start the whole process over again, to catch any high or low spots that you missed the first time, or that you created while fixing another problem. You can again choose to do the whole car, or just select areas. This time, use 220 grit wet paper on your hand held sanding block.

Guide Coat

To be able to block sand effectively you should use a guide coat, since you have already removed all or part of the original black finish. A guide coat consists of a very light application of a contrasting color sprayed over the area to be sanded. As you sand, the guide coat is removed, letting you know that you have sanded thoroughly. Areas where the guide coat doesn't sand off are low, and should be filled. Even "rattle can" paint can be used for the guide coat, because you will be sanding off the entire coat each time.

Fill Low Spots

After block sanding with 220 grit wet paper over the guide coat, fill any low spots with your catalyzed polyester filler or primer. Make sure areas to be filled have been thoroughly sanded before putting filler in. (Sand off the guide coat).

Primer Again

If filler has been used or if the gelcoat has been sanded through, these areas should then be primed. (Be sure to sand the filled areas first). Fill any pin-holes with primer.

Repeat

These steps can be repeated as many times as is necessary to get your body to its desired smoothness. Professionals and other perfectionists may sand and fill an entire car five or six times. Not just on our bodies--ours are actually straighter to begin with than most original and reproduction Fords.

Final Sand

When you are satisfied that the car is as smooth as you want it and after all areas sanded with 220 grit wet paper have been primed, guide coat the entire area to be painted. For the final block sanding, use a more flexible block with 320 grit wet paper for solid color paint jobs or 360 grit wet paper for metallic colors, unless your paint manufacturer has different recommendations. Always be sure to check your paint manufacturer's directions before taking anyone else's advice. Even ours!!!!

Another Tip

Sand each primer coat in only one direction; don't criss-cross or circle. Good professional painters primer and sand the entire car several times, sanding each primer coat in a different direction--up, down, and both diagonals. The final sanding should follow the line of the car from front to back.

Step 4. Sealer Selection

Choose Your Sealer & Paint

The project is now ready for sealer and paint. The sealer should be a good grade compatible with the top coats. It is O.K. to use air dry materials at this point, but we prefer a catalyzed sealer, since it will be used with catalyzed polyester primer and gelcoat. However, it is more important that the sealer is compatible with top coats, and not all paints come with catalyzed sealers, so follow the manufacturer's recommendation for your paint. It is usually best to buy an entire paint system (sealer and top coats--not primer) from one manufacturer, to be sure that they are compatible.

Paint Tip

Always apply your paint according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's recommendations for personal safety equipment, ventilation, and any other requirements.

While all of these steps may seem confusing at first, remember that they are all just variations on the basic pattern of block sand, fill, primer. The block sanding step consists of spraying a guide coat, then sanding to contour. The filling step consists of sanding or grinding low spots, filling, and sanding again. Finally, the priming step consists of priming, filling pinholes, and sanding. When this is done, your car is ready for a beautiful paint job.

CAUTION: If it becomes necessary to strip paint off of fiberglass parts, you should take care not to allow removers to penetrate into the fiberglass layup. Special removers that don't attack polyesters can be used--but carefully.