



How to Clean, Polish, and Wax Your Boat

This guide offers easy step-by-step instructions for cleaning, polishing, and waxing your boat, with beautiful, long-lasting results.

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INTRODUCTION

Maintaining a showroom shine on your boat not only makes you and your boat look good, it protects the gelcoat or paint surface from the elements so it looks better and lasts longer. TotalBoat has [convenient kits](#) that make polishing and waxing more affordable and much easier — whether you're a boatyard pro, or a DIY boat owner doing it for the first time. Before you start, be sure your work area is well ventilated. If you work outdoors, avoid working in direct sunlight because the heat will make the [cleaning](#), [polishing](#), and [waxing](#) products dry on the surface, making them harder to remove.

TotalBoat makes a comprehensive line of products for cleaning, [polishing](#), and waxing your boat by hand or by machine. This guide shows you which products to use when machine buffing and polishing. To save money, take a look at our kits: [TotalBoat Boat Polishing Kits](#) and [TotalBoat Hand Polishing Kits](#).



TOOLS:

- [Nitrile Gloves](#) (1)
- [Protective Eyewear](#) (1)
- [Boat Polishing Kits](#) (1)
- [Boat Washing Sponge](#) (1)
- [Boat Washing Brush](#) (1)
- [3M 2090 Blue Masking Tape](#) (1)
- [7 Inch Angle Polisher / Sander](#) (1)
- [3M Double Sided Polishing Pad](#) (1)
- [3M Double Sided Polishing Pad Mandrel Adapter](#) (1)
- [Chip Brushes](#) (1)
- [Tyvek Paint Suit \(no hood\)](#) (1)



PARTS:

- [TotalBoat White Knight Fiberglass Stain Remover](#) (1)
- [TotalBoat Boat Soap](#) (1)
- [TotalBoat Dewaxer and Surface Prep](#) (1)
- [TotalBoat Eco Solvent](#) (1)
- [TotalBoat TotalBuff Rubbing Compound](#) (1)
- [TotalBoat TotalShine Finishing Compound](#) (1)
- [TotalBoat Premium Boat Wax](#) (1)
- [TotalBoat Cleaning & Wiping Rags](#) (1)
- [TotalBoat Microfiber Cleaning Towels](#) (1)


Step 1 — Remove stains (optional)



- ❗ Got stains? [TotalBoat White Knight fiberglass stain remover](#) can be used on fiberglass, gelcoat, and painted hulls and transoms to remove stubborn rust, scum, and exhaust stains. Also works great on waterline stains such as algae and scum.
- Before you start, wear gloves and eye protection. Wet the area first, then always test in a small, inconspicuous spot before using on a larger area. Use a [brush](#) or a [clean rag](#) to apply a thin layer of [White Knight](#) to the surface.
- Wait 10-15 minutes for White Knight to work, then scrub lightly with a soft brush or [sponge](#). Rinse the surface thoroughly with water to remove the [fiberglass stain remover](#) before it dries.
- **Application Tips:** Don't let White Knight dry on the surface, or it'll take more effort to remove. Tough stains may need a second application.

Step 2 — Wash and dry the boat



 [TotalBoat Boat Soap](#) is 100% biodegradable and easy to use, so it's safe to use in the driveway or at the marina.

- To use, just add the appropriate amount of [Boat Soap](#) to a bucket, then add water (add 1 cap of Boat Soap per gallon of water).
- Rinse the boat first. Then use a soft, [long-handled brush](#) or [a sponge](#) soaked with soapy water and scrub lightly, then rinse completely with clean water.
- Finally, hand dry or allow the surface to air dry before masking, polishing, and waxing.

Step 3 — Mask below the waterline



- To prevent bottom paint from getting rubbed around in the polish and wax, mask below the waterline. Be sure to use a [quick-release masking tape](#) that won't leave residue.

Step 4 — Dewax the hull



- ❗ It's important to remove all previous wax and contamination from the boat before you apply rubbing compound. Different finishes will require different products, as described below.

- **Dewaxing Gelcoat:** Wet a clean, lint-free [cotton rag](#) with [TotalBoat Dewaxer & Surface Prep](#), acetone, or [TotalBoat Eco Solvent](#). Wipe the surface with the dampened rag, then follow with a second dry, clean rag to dry the surface. Repeat this 2-rag wiping method until the entire surface has been dewaxed, changing rags often.
- **Dewaxing 2-Part Paints:** Although TotalBoat [Dewaxer & Surface Prep](#), acetone, or TotalBoat [Eco Solvent](#) may work, it's important to contact the paint manufacturer to determine if these solvents are safe for use with their paint system, in order to avoid warranty issues. Some manufacturers may have proprietary products for their systems.
- ⚠ **Dewaxing 1-Part Paints:** Do not use harsh solvents on 1-part paints because solvents can remove, dull, or soften these coatings. Here is a concoction that's safe for 1-part paints, and also works for other cleaning applications: Make a mixture of TSP and clean water, mix together, then add 2-5% Simple Green.
- For 1 part paints, softly scrubbing the surface with a white or gray [Scotch-Brite](#) pad will also help to remove wax. Be careful not to scrub too hard.

Step 5 — Compounding



- [TotalBoat TotalBuff](#) is a fast-cut liquid rubbing compound that removes heavy oxidation and 600-800 grit wet sanding scratches. Apply it with a [clean cotton rag](#) to an area 2' x 2'. Do not allow it to dry completely.
- Buff with an [electric buffer](#) with a [wool](#) (not foam) compounding pad attached. Continue this process until the entire surface is covered. When finished, remove residue by wiping the surface with a [clean microfiber rag](#) soaked with clean clear water.

Compounding Tips:

- When buffing, start slowly with more pressure, and finish with high speed and light pressure, for best results.
- It's easier if you have one person applying [TotalBuff](#), and another person buffing the surface, so you can work more efficiently and finish the job faster.

Step 6 — Finishing



- [TotalBoat TotalShine](#) removes compound swirl marks and fine sanding scratches to leave a high-gloss, glazed finish. Apply it with a clean cotton [rag](#) to an area 2' x 2'. Do not allow it to dry completely.
- Buff with an electric buffer with a [wool polishing pad](#) attached. Continue this process until the entire surface is covered.
 - ⓘ Tip: When [polishing](#), start slowly with more pressure, and finish with high speed and light pressure, for best results.
- When finished, remove residue with a [clean microfiber cloth](#) soaked with clean clear water.
- Dry the surface with a clean cotton rag.

Step 7 — Waxing



- [TotalBoat Premium Boat Wax](#) is a wipe-on, wipe-off, easy to use, non-abrasive marine paste wax that leaves a hard, lustrous, protective finish. Start with a clean surface. Use a soft applicator pad to apply [Premium Boat Wax](#) in a circular motion to small areas at a time. Do not allow the wax to dry completely.
- Rub off the wax with a clean soft microfiber cloth.
 - ① The [microfiber](#) cloth removes extra wax, leaving a shiny, protected surface.
 - ① **Tip:** If the microfiber cloth becomes saturated with wax, it can take more effort and more time to remove the [wax](#) on the surface. To prevent this, change out [microfiber towels](#), as needed.
- When you're done, stand back, admire the shine, and get ready to splash!

Step 8 — Personal Safety



⚠ Stay safe while cleaning, polishing, and waxing your boat by wearing proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for the job at hand.

- Read the safety information on all product labels.
- Read the information in the SDS (safety data sheets) for each product, especially Section 8: Exposure Controls / Personal Protection.
- Gather the proper PPE items, as stated by the manufacturers, for example, respirators, protective gloves, and proper eye, face, skin, and clothing protection.