

## Refreshing the Chrome on Your Classic

The two things that have the greatest initial impact on spectators and judges when you show your car are the paint and the chrome. These two factors alone can make the difference between a first place trophy and not placing at all. The problem is that chrome work is one thing most restorers can't do at home. We usually have no alternative but to trust our classic's precious bright work to a commercial plating shop. Even though you have to send your parts out, there are some things you can do to insure the best work possible.

First, it is imperative that you find a good plater. This is a crucial step. If the people doing your work are not careful, they can easily buff lines and lettering right off and make your trim items look terrible. If a chrome shop isn't experienced enough and doesn't know how to work with old, cast, pot metal parts such as door handles and hood ornaments, they might literally dissolve them when they try to plate them.

One way to find a good chrome shop is to go to local car shows and ask around. Chances are that someone there can recommend a craftsman who will do a good job. Another approach is to join the club for your marque and ask some of the experts at club headquarters. Finally, you can also try local body shops to see if they know of a good plater.

Before you start the replating process, let's discuss removing the chrome from your classic.

Remove the chrome from your classic very carefully so that you do not chip the paint or break anything. Trim pieces can be difficult to replace on more rare cars. Save the fasteners in labeled, plastic zip-lock bags so that you won't lose them.

When you finish taking everything off, lay the pieces out on the floor and photograph them to create a visual record before sending them out. This way you can verify that nothing is missing when you get your parts back from the plater.

Also, it is a good idea to tape long, thin strips like belt moldings to pieces of wood, so there is no way they can get bent. The plater can use the wood to back the piece when he's buffing the item too.

If you have any bolts you want plated, don't forget to wrap their threads with plastic electrical tape. If you don't, the chrome will get on the threads and the nuts won't go back on the bolts properly.

Now your chrome pieces are ready to be plated.

If some of your pot metal parts are badly pitted, it is best to replace them. Deep pits will not polish out. Of course, if you are restoring a rare car, you may have to stick with what you've got, or possibly have new items cast in brass. If you want to try to save the badly pitted parts, you can first have them copper plated. Then fill the pits with silver solder and clean them up with a fine file. After that, you can take the items back and have them chromed with good results.

When your parts come back from the plater, refer to your photos to make sure you have everything. Then check each item carefully for nickel shadow. Nickel shadow shows up as a slightly golden patch where the nickel underneath is showing through the chrome. If you are not sure whether you've found nickel shadow or not, exhale on the area. The condensation from your breath will make it more obvious. Take any parts with nickel shadow back to the chrome shop to have them redone.

With these few tips, it's really pretty easy to get good chrome work. If you make sure you use a good plater, you'll get results you can be proud of.