

Details, Details, Details

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Yup, it's all about the details... on your car, that is. We're only about 7 weeks from the Arthritis Auto Show on July 9th and 10th. A number of folks have asked me about judging criteria, car prep and more, so I thought now would be a good time to talk about those things.

First, come out and join us for the show! Whether you have it judged or not, bring your car out and join us for a great day of fun with your fellow car enthusiasts. Remember, you can display your car, but not have it judged if you like. It's the same price either way.

Speaking of price, general admission is \$10 per person. Showing your car on Saturday only costs \$30. That means if you and your spouse come out, it's only an extra \$10 to park inside the show with us! It'll save you a lot of walking from the parking area. :O)

Now, about the show in general... Nearly everything you need to know can be found on the show website at: <http://arthritisautoshow.com>. Be sure to sign up early so you can get the pre-registration gift. My understanding is that those will be passed out at the show. Judging should be completed by 3pm. If you won something, you'll know then. If you win your class, you are invited to join in the awards parade that takes place about 4:30. In either case, you should be able to make it to the Bardons for their Independence Day celebration.

Speaking of celebration, for those who haven't heard this already the Miata is one of the featured marques of the show along with the Covair and Datsun/Nissan Z cars. We are also having a small celebration of the 20th anniversary of our club. We're planning for a cake, refreshments and most importantly, member awards! I think I'm probably in the running for "*Most likely to end up at the side of the road*". Details on these awards and how to vote on them will be forthcoming.

So... let's assume you're going to put the car in the show and be judged. The first thing you need to know about prepping your car is the judging criteria. An explanation of the judging can be found here: <http://arthritisautoshow.com/judging.php>. **BE SURE TO DOWNLOAD AND READ THE JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS** available on that webpage!

Based on the judging instructions, your car will be judged in the following areas. I've included some tips/tricks and comments for each:

- **Body & Paint** – *Sheet metal, paint, smoothness, absence of flaws (stone chips, door dings), uniformity of color, alignment of panels, doors & lids*

Wash & wax the paint; polish before waxing if needed. Touch-up rock chips if possible, make sure your headlight lids are lined up with the hood! (NAs only) Make it look good from only a few feet away. Don't forget the door jambs and such!

- **Upholstery** – *Seats, door coverings, kick panels, headliner, floor mats and carpets and trunk mat/carpeting*

Make sure all these are fresh & clean. A Magic Eraser, used VERY gently, can remove stubborn marks on the doors, kick panels and thresholds. If your floor mats are beyond help, buy new or leave them out rather than having grungy ones on the floor. A stiff brush helps bring up stuff from the carpet when you're vacuuming.

- **Interior Hardware** – *Dash, instruments, under dash detail, vents, visors, steering wheel, pedals, door & window handles & storage compartments*

Again, make sure everything is clean and tidy! Don't forget the backside of the steering wheel and under the seats. The vents can be cleaned with q-tips. A small paint brush is ideal for getting into the nooks and crannies. Don't overdo the vinyl protectant. If it looks too shiny, wait a day, and wipe it down with a moist cloth to knock the shine back nicely.

- **Engine** – *Appearance of engine compartment, engine accessories, battery, condition of insulation, fire wall & radiator*

A little degreaser and a couple different-sized paint brushes are the key here. Go easy on rinsing it off; don't get water in the spark plug wells. Aluminum foil is great to use for masking off the valve cover, plug wires and coil since it stays where you put it. DON'T let degreaser sit for more than 30 seconds or so on the bare aluminum valve cover, intake manifold or throttle body as it can cause discoloration on those items. Do not get degreaser on the oil filler cap of the Mazdaspeed models, ask me why...

- **Exterior Trim** – *Lamps, bumpers, grill, moldings, gas filler and trim pieces*

A soft paint brush can help get the old wax and other crud out from the edges of trim, badges and marker lights. Be sure to remove any old wax from the lettering on the marker and tail lights. Don't forget to clean under the gas filler door!

- **Undercarriage** – *Condition of wheel wells, sheet metal, splash pans, exhaust, finish & cleanliness*

Generally speaking, they are referring to the wheel wells, visible splash pans and exhaust tips. I doubt anyone is going to be on the ground looking underneath unless they need to break a tie. Removing the wheels makes it easier to do the wheel wells. Don't forget the brake hardware and suspension pieces if they are visible through your wheels.

- **Wheels, Tires, Hubcaps** – *Condition of wheels, condition of tires and valve stems*

Clean the wheels; scrub and dress the tires. Don't forget to have caps on all the valve stems. Brake cleaner can be used on stubborn wheel deposits.

- **Top, Glass & Accessories** – *Condition of convertible top, targa or removable, top panels, sunroof, windows and accessories, including tool kit & owners manual*

Clean the top; make sure the glass is clean. If you have a plastic window, Meguiar's Plast-X (or #40 plastic polish) or Novus plastic cleaner/polish can be used to clear up the window. Make sure all glass is clean, inside and out. Have the factory jack and jack handle placed in their proper places. Clean and dress the spare tire if needed. Clean and polish any chrome accessories.

You might think that's a long list... and it is. But, it's all things your car needs in order to look its best anyway, right? I'd plan on spending 4-5 evenings, depending on the starting condition of your car. My strategy, for what it's worth, is to make the judge think "wow" when he walks up to the car. Don't give them anything to find that would call into question the cleanliness of the rest of the car.

If you have any questions about prepping your car, give me call or drop me a line. Hopefully, we can fit in a little detailing day at my house between now and the show.

Disclaimer: *A clean car is a happy car. Not responsible for OCD that results from prepping a car for show. Mr. Miyagi says: Wax on, wax off.*