

# GEL COAT RESTORATION

Good boat maintenance is reflected in the appearance of your boat, which is almost totally determined by the condition of the gel coat. A badly maintained gel coat can lead to oxidation, a dull, chalk-like finish that diminishes the aesthetics of your boat's finish. Oxidation also leads to greater damage through water intrusion. Restoring your boat's gel coat and then following [a gel coat maintenance plan](#) will increase the life and value of your boat.

Here are the steps to follow if you suspect your boat's gel coat has oxidized:

## **1. Determine the Level of Oxidation**

In most cases, oxidated gel coats are easily restored to their formal shine with cleaning, oxidation removers and waxing. Medium to heavy cases of oxidation require polishing compounds and possibly the handiwork of a professional.

If the surface of your boat appears dull or chalky, it is likely that your gel coat has oxidized. Gel coat oxidation is easily remedied in most cases, but may require the hand of a professional if the oxidation is severe.

- **Signs of Light Oxidation**

If your boat's gel coat is slightly oxidized, most of the surface will be shiny with a few patches of dullness or cloudiness. At this stage of oxidation, a simple oxidation removing compound applied to the hull will remove oxidation and restore the shine.



- **Signs of Medium Oxidation**

The entire surface of the boat will be dull with little reflectivity, and there will be signs of pitting. To remove the oxidation and smooth the pitting, you will need to apply a polishing compound using a circular motion with a machine buffer. The polish, similar to fine sandpaper, removes the pitted surface rather than coating it.



- **Signs of Heavy Oxidation**

The entire surface of the boat will have no reflectivity and may be chalky to the touch - pitting is obvious. At this stage of oxidation, washing, sanding and polishing are required. In most cases though, restoration will mean intense work to restore the shine and may require the attention of a professional. In the worst oxidation cases, the gel coat may be beyond restoration and painting the boat may be the only option.



The best medicine for gel coat oxidation is prevention. Follow a simple [gel coat maintenance plan](#) to protect your boat's gel coat. If you suspect your boat's gel coat is already oxidized, try these simple tips to remove gel coat oxidation and [restore your boat's gel coat](#) to its original lustre.

## 2. Restore your boat's gel coat

- **For Light Oxidation**

If your boat's gel coat suffers from light oxidation, simply clean the boat using a fiberglass cleaner followed by an oxidation remover. This should restore the shine. Waxing the surface with carnuba wax as suggested in my gel coat maintenance plan will fill the pits and leave behind a smooth and shiny gel coat. Microscopic pitting can also be sealed using a sealant that fills in all the holes, pits and crevices in the gel coat surface.

- **For Medium Oxidation**

Although boats with medium oxidation present a tougher case, restoration of the gel coat is still possible. As with boats with light oxidation, the first step to restore your boat with medium oxidation is to clean it with a fiberglass cleaner and follow that with a stronger oxidation remover. If you cannot remove the oxidation completely with the remover product, use a buffer and polishing compound, which is slightly abrasive. Once you have completed the oxidation removal process, polish the boat and apply a sealant.

- **For Heavy Oxidation**

Before beginning the project of restoring a boat with heavy oxidation, take into consideration how much time and effort you want to spend on it. In some cases, hiring a professional to do the work may be necessary, especially if the gel coat is beyond hope and requires painting. If you determine to do the work yourself, fine-sand the gel coat and then buff with a gel coat restorer product, and follow that with a polish and a sealant.

Once you have restored your boat to its former glory, maintain the glossy exterior by following a regular [gel coat maintenance plan](#).