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If you own a car, it's inevitable: Your car is going to get hit by car doors, banged by shopping carts, blasted with gravel on the highway and hit by every other conceivable thing that will chip and scratch your paint. Repairing the paint keeps your vehicle looking great, and it protects your investment and avoids costly trips to the auto body shop. Touch up paint is an option that many turn away from because they are afraid of applying it incorrectly or have had a bad experience in the past. But knowing how to apply touch up paint can be easy and get your car looking like it just came out of the showroom.

Pick Your Paint

Before you get started, it's important to get your touch up paint color matched. Many manufacturers color match to your vehicle's paint code. Look up your paint code on the label in your vehicle's driver side door, and consult with your local Corcoran Autobody Repairs to confirm that you have the matching touch up color for your specific vehicle. It's not a bad idea to test the paint on a separate metal surface and hold it up to your vehicle to make sure it's right.

It's All in the Prep

Like anything in life, extra time put into prep will pay off in the finished product. Make sure the climate conditions are optimal for painting. A well-ventilated, shaded area that's dust free with low humidity and a temperature around 70 degrees is ideal for application of most touch up paints. Once you've chosen your spot to perform the touch up, clean the area to be painted with soap and grease remover. If the area has any rust, use 220-grit sandpaper to remove it. Then apply a thin coat of automotive primer and let it dry overnight.

Base Coat

Once the primer is dried, apply your base coat of color in light coats, allowing each to dry before applying another. Don't worry about getting the color solid on the first shot. The idea here is to build up thin layers of paint that will even out as you lay them down. Once you've applied an adequate amount of touch up paint, allow the paint to dry overnight, just as you did the primer.

Clear Coat

With the paint cured, it's time to apply a clear coat in a similar fashion as you did with the paint. Apply clear coat in thin, light layers, allowing it to dry completely between applications. When applying the clear coat, be careful to float it over the base coat and not blast it off; any amount of pressure could remove the paint, and you'll have to start over again.

Polish It Up

If your touch up work doesn't appear perfect at this point, it's alright. The final step in this process is the one that will blend it in to the rest of your car's painted surface. Allow the paint and clear coats to harden for a few days. Then apply rubbing compound to the entire area. Follow the compound's directions to ensure a smooth, shiny finish.



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Knowing how to apply touch up paint correctly can save you time and money, and most importantly, it will keep your car looking showroom new. Making sure you have the correct color-matched paint color and putting a little extra time into the prep and performance of your touch up will ensure your paint comes out perfect every time.