

Scratch removers They don't go deep

Many people would assume a product called a "scratch remover" would remove all scratches from a car's paint. But after testing seven do-it-yourself scratch removers, we found they have their limits.

All can remove very light scratches and imperfections, such as swirl marks, hazing, or oxidation. But only one, Quixx Scratch Remover, did a good job of smoothing out a scratch that's deep enough to feel if you run a fingernail across it. And even with Quixx, you have to be careful you don't make the condition worse.

The products make this distinction, but you have to know some terms to understand that.

ANATOMY OF A SCRATCH

Swirl marks are the light, often circular scratches that can result from washing or

drying your car with a dirty cloth, using an overly abrasive polish, or using a drive-through car wash that hasn't been well maintained, among other causes. In addition to the scratch removers we tested, a cleaner/wax or some car polishes can be used to smooth out the marks.

Deeper, more noticeable scratches are harder to correct. Those that haven't penetrated the paint's clearcoat layer can be made less noticeable by using one of the better products in this group. Scratches that expose the primer or metal underneath, however, must be repainted. You can try using touch-up paint, but a profes-

sional is most likely to provide the best results.

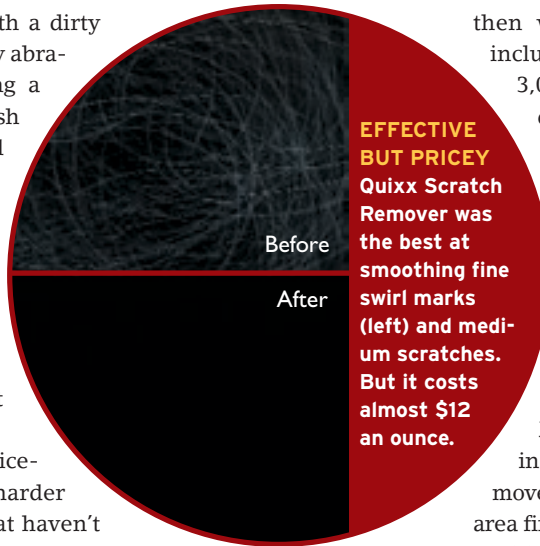
HOW THE PRODUCTS WORK

All of the scratch removers we tested are liquids applied to the area of the scratch, rubbed in for a minute or two, and

then wiped off. Quixx also includes a strip of ultrafine, 3,000-grit sandpaper for deeper scratches. But if you're not careful, you could sand through the clearcoat, which would necessitate repainting.

Keep in mind that scratch removers can cause hazing, as the GS27 and Meguiar's products did in our tests. Try the remover in an inconspicuous area first.

After using any scratch remover, apply a car wax to help protect the surface. In previous tests, we gave top marks to Black Magic Wet Shine Liquid Wax, Turtle Wax Carnauba Car Wax, and Eagle One Nanowax. All can help remove oxidation and swirl marks.



Preventing scratches

- Wash your car once a week. Dirt on the paint can easily lead to scratches.
- Don't slide objects across the paint. Even grocery bags can cause scratches.
- If you wash a car by hand, don't use an abrasive cloth such as one with synthetic fibers. We suggest a clean sponge or sheepskin mitt.
- Hose off any dirt or grime before you begin washing, and frequently rinse the sponge or mitt in clean water. If it drops on the ground, don't use it until it has been thoroughly cleaned.
- Dry the paint with a clean chamois or terrycloth towels.
- Wax using microfiber towels or soft all-cotton cloths, such as cloth diapers.

Ratings scratch removers



In performance order.

Key number	Brand & product	Price	Size (oz.)	Cost per oz.	Overall score	Test results		
						Swirl marks/very fine scratches	Fine to medium scratches	Ease of use
1	Quixx High Performance Scratch Remover	\$21	1.8	\$11.67	90	●	○	○
2	Mothers California Gold Scratch Remover	6	8.0	0.75	76	○	○	●
3	NuFinish Scratch Doctor	10	6.5	1.54	74	○	○	●
4	Meguiar's ScratchX	8	7.0	1.14	62	○	○	●
5	GS27 Scratch Remover	10	5.3	1.89	62	○	○	●
6	Black Magic Express Scratch Treatment	6	1.8	3.33	58	○	●	●
7	Turtle Wax Scratch & Swirl Remover (T-237)	7	16.0	0.44	58	○	○	●

† Price is for both tubes of a two-step process.