

Spring Cleaning: Lexus Care Advice from Professional Detailers

April 06, 2022

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Inside and out, your Lexus vehicle is a sleek expression of elegance that's carefully designed to protect itself against the rigors of use and travel. But because it's also part of your life, your Lexus is still, no doubt, occasionally subjected to normal spills and smudges that come from a well-used vehicle that belongs on the road—be it for a getaway or daily routine.

Many Lexus dealerships, of course, have skilled detailing teams who can help spruce up your vehicle (and tackle the effects of messy situations like, say, a leaking grocery bag). But for those of you who enjoy regularly cleaning your Lexus, or are wondering what to do when messes happen, know that there are a few recommendations when it comes to cleaning your vehicle.

Carpets: The number one rule with most Lexus carpet or carpet floormat spills, says one Lexus dealership detailer, is to avoid letting the liquid dry out—drying is what leads to staining. Lexus detailing teams can often clean most liquid spills as long as you take some immediate steps.

First, gently blot the area with an absorbent cloth to get as much of the liquid out, then lightly apply dish soap with a soft dish towel (avoid bathroom cleaners or anything with ammonia). Then blot the area again with a wet cloth to remove the soap and keep the area damp with a wet rag until you can get your vehicle to the Lexus dealership.

For sticky materials that have hardened into the carpet or floormat, you can often remove it by gently—but firmly—rubbing a credit card back and forth over the area, holding the card at a slight angle. Also know that there's a type of material that's usually impossible to remove without leaving a trace: high-fructose corn syrup, which is often found in candy, fruit juices, and sports drinks. It can actually damage carpet fibers, which is why Lexus detailers recommend you avoid bringing anything sugary, especially sports drinks, into your vehicle interior.

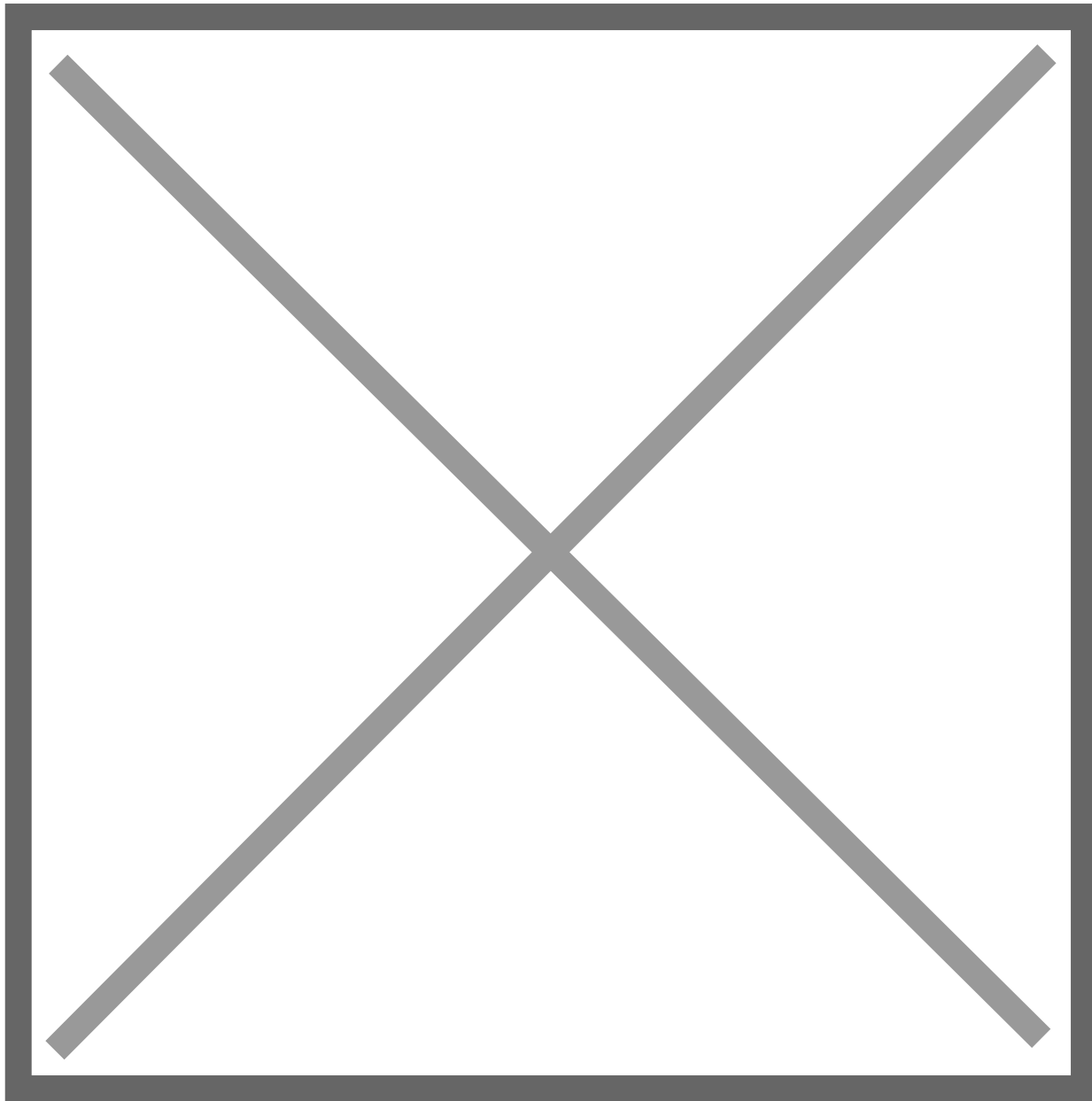
Windows: A common tip from many Lexus dealership detailing teams is to avoid washing windows in direct sunlight, which often dries the cleaner too quickly and causes streaking.

And to clean your windows like a pro, liberally spray a glass cleaner onto a soft, lint-free microfiber cloth or a waffle cloth (a waffle-patterned cloth is available at auto parts stores)—not directly on the windows. From there, lower the windows and clean the top edges, which is a place many drivers ignore but pro detailers generally clean first (hidden grime gets trapped up there over time).

After that, clean the inside and outside of windows with the cleaner-soaked cloth, wiping each surface dry with a separate lint-free microfiber cloth.

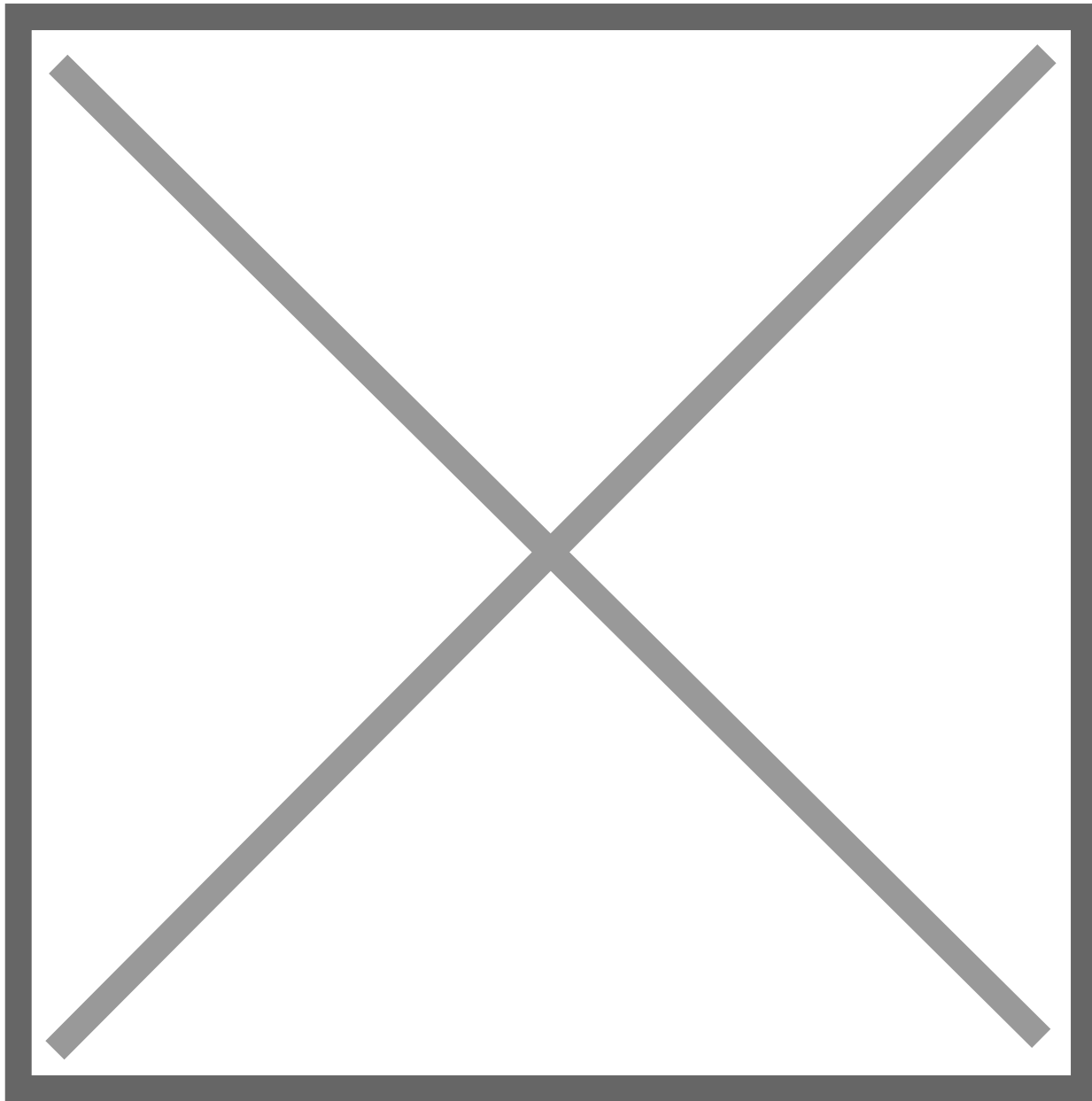
Seats and trim components: For both hard cabin surfaces (like wood trim) and soft materials (like seats, cloth-covered trim, and dashboards), also lightly spray the cleaner onto a microfiber cloth to avoid getting cleaning liquids into vents, button seams, or speakers.

For these non-glass interior surfaces, both hard and soft, many Lexus detailers recommend using a citrus-based all-purpose cleaner (non-concentrated), which is gentle on Lexus interiors. Make sure to avoid furniture polishers and common brand-name auto-interior cleaning products, which can damage Lexus dash materials.



Screens: Fingerprints are obviously the most common reason screens need cleaning, and when sprucing up your vehicle's display screen, avoid using ammonia-based cleaners, which can damage the surface. Most Lexus detailing teams recommend glass cleaners, as long as they don't contain ammonia.

As with windows and other interior elements, professional Lexus detailers first spray the cleaner onto a lint-free microfiber cloth, not directly onto the surface—in this case, just one light squirt. Then wipe the screen. Also *never* use a microfiber cloth that's been dropped on the ground. It's a good practice when cleaning any Lexus component, but it's especially vital for screens, which can be easily scratched by unseen particles picked up from the ground.



Wheels: Tires can be cleaned with soap and water, but Lexus wheel spokes will look their best with some special considerations. Brake dust can mix in with road grime to build up in the smaller spoke spaces, which makes them hard to clean well.

Here's how the pros do it: liberally spray wheel cleaner directly onto the spokes, then insert two fingers into a cleaning rag (cleaning mitts and waffle cloths work well) and firmly clean each crevice with one or two fingers. Once the area is clean and wiped dry with a towel, consider applying a brake-dust barrier (your Lexus dealership may have a recommended brand for purchase, and you'll also find good ones at automotive stores).

Sticky exterior materials: To remove sticky materials from your vehicle's body, such as road tar or tree sap, you can use an auto-body solvent or lacquer-based cleaner (available at auto parts stores). First, pour some cleaner onto a clean cloth and wipe the affected area gently until the residue has been fully removed, and repeat this step as needed.

Another option is a cleaning clay (also available at auto parts stores). How it works: gently rub the clay over the sticky material, which will help extract it without damaging the body. Some polishing may be needed afterward. A soft microfiber cloth—free of debris—can be used with some polishing wax to finish the affected area.

Of course, if you have any questions or concerns about Lexus cleaning, mention it to your Lexus service advisor, who can explain Lexus dealership cleaning and detailing options (which may vary between dealers). Lexus dealerships generally recommend an annual professional detailing session, and their skilled detailing teams can take care of more advanced issues, like polishing interior trim elements on older models and sanding out headlamp scratches.