

## What about washing my car with all this green?

With the rising price of gas, new car sales are falling. And many of us are driving around in cars that are not, perhaps, as sexy and new as we would like them to be. For now, all we can do is cross our fingers in the hopes that water-fueled engines are just over the horizon... and keep our older-than-desired cars as clean as we can. Which means a lot of trips to the car wash.

But a car wash sucks up a lot of water. It can be difficult for the person who both wants to keep their car clean, and keep the environment safe. And for those of us whose math skills do not allow us to instantly calculate how many gallons of water are gushing out of a hose, it can be hard to know what kind of car wash is easiest on the environment. In reality, all of them are... and none of them. To find out more about the good and bad effects different car wash types have on the environment, read on.

**Home Car Wash:** When you wash your car at home, you have total control over what products you use and how much water you need. Some soaps and products used in washing cars can really harm the earth. With a home car wash, however, you can control what you use, and use soaps and cleaners that don't do as much harm to the environment. Plus, you get a bit of exercise, some sunshine, and maybe a water hose fight... pretty fun. However, washing your car at home is also the option that uses up the most water. The average amount of water used when washing a vehicle at home is fifty gallons. Remember, though-- if you want to control how much water you use, you can.

**Self-Service Car Wash:** The best thing about a self-service (generally coin-operated) car wash is that you'll use much less water than you'd normally use at home. For an average sized, not-too-dirty car, a self-serve car wash uses up only 12 to 14 gallons of water. Also, when you go to one of those self-service car washes where you bring your own products, you're the one who chooses how environmentally safe those products are or are not. One thing you don't get with a self-serve car wash, however, is the lovely convenience of washing your car without even leaving the house-- or getting it all done for you at a full-service.

**Full Service Car Wash:** A full service car wash has a lot of pros. For one, it's super easy and convenient, of course. A professional car wash also requires less water than using the hose at home; 11 gallons or so for a small car, and 20 gallons or so for a truck or sport utility vehicle. On the other hand, some professional car washes can harm the environment in other ways. More than a few of them use products that drain hazardous chemicals into the oceans and ground water. Others, however, are more environmentally friendly... you just have to choose wisely.

## About the Author

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