Compounding, polishing, glazing and finishing, what's the difference?

Compounding typically refers to defect removal. You are abrading away the top paint or clear coat layer to remove a swirl, scratch or water spot. Compounding is accomplished using an abrasive polish and a foam or wool pad with an aggressive cutting power. This abrasion may leave the surface dull. We call this dullness compounding haze.

Polishing restores surface gloss and prepares the surface for the final wax or sealant. Polishing is done after compounding to eliminate compounding haze but can be done anytime to restore surface gloss, remove existing wax or sealant coatings and visually reduce minor swirls. Many different polishes are available. Some are non-abrasive (very gentle cleaners) and some have mild abrasives (to remove fine swirls and spider-webbing). Polishing pads have a mild “cut” that offers gentle cleaning without creating surface haze.

Compounding and polishing are combined in this guide because they are the same procedure differing only in the pad and product used.

Glazing or finessing is a step used by professionals to obtain maximum light reflection and/or liquidity. Glazes are typically polishes without any cleaning ability. They “wet” the surface with oils to maximize surface gloss and may contain fillers to hide minor defects not removed by polishing. Glazing is done after polishing but before applying the final wax or sealant. Glazing pads are softer than polishing pads having no or almost no cleaning or cutting power.

Finishing refers to applying the final wax or paint sealant. Finishing pads are the softest of all foam pads. They should almost float over the surface. They can also be used to build up multiple layers of wax or apply one sealant on top of another.

Recommended compounding pads:
- #41-355, 8.5 inch, Wool Cutting Pad (very heavy cut)
- #41-345, 7.5 inch, Wool Cutting Pad (very heavy cut)
- #77-216, 6 inch, Lambswool Pad (very heavy cut)
- CCS-85Y, 8.5 inch, Yellow Compounding Pad (heavy cut)
- CCS-75Y, 7.5 inch, Yellow Compounding Pad (heavy cut)
- CCS-65Y, 6.5 inch, Yellow Compounding Pad (heavy cut)
- CCS-65PWR, 6.5 inch, Orange Power Pad (moderate cut)
- CCS-75PWR, 7.5 inch, Orange Power Pad (moderate cut)
- CCS-4PWR, 4 inch, Orange Power Pad Jr. (moderate cut)

Recommended polishing pads:
- CCS-85W, 8.5 inch, White Polishing Pad (mild cut)
- CCS-75W, 7.5 inch, White Polishing Pad (mild cut)
- CCS-65W, 6.5 inch, White Polishing Pad (mild cut)
- CCS-4W, 4 inch, White Polishing Pad (mild cut)

Recommended glazing pads:
- CCS-85G, 8.5 inch, Black Glazing/Finishing Pad (no cut)
- CCS-75G, 7.5 inch, Black Glazing/Finessing Pad (no cut)
- CCS-65G, 6.5 inch, Black Glazing/Finessing Pad (no cut)

Recommended finishing pads:
- CCS-85G, 8.5 inch, Black Glazing/Finishing Pad (no cut)
- CCS-75R, 7.5 inch, Red Finishing Pad (no cut)
- CCS-65R, 6.5 inch, Red Finishing Pad (no cut)

Proper pad care:
Soak dirty pads in a bucket of soapy water or use a pad cleaning solution such as Snappy Clean Pad Cleaner. Thoroughly rinse pads, (a garden hose works great), hand wring out excess water and allow to air dry. Clean pads after each use and they will last for years. Do not allow polish and wax residues to dry in the pad.

The biggest cause of pad failure or pads creating swirls is from improperly cleaned (dirty) pads.

Snappy Clean Pad Cleaner and other pad cleaning tools are available online at www.properautocare.com.

Additional instructions:
These instructions are ment as a basic guide. Some experimentation is to be expected as products vary from company to company. Some products apply best with a dry pad while others apply best with a pad misted with water. Some residues buff off best with a damp cloth while other products buff off better with a dry cloth. Don’t be afraid to experiment if you experience difficulty with any specific step.
Applying a Compound or Polish using a dual-action (Porter Cable 7424) polisher:

- Place the proper pad on the backing plate and attach to your machine polisher.
- Work on a small area, 18 to 24 inches square, out of direct sunlight.
- Apply two, 8 inch lines of compound or polish directly to the surface.
- Mist the pad very lightly with Pad Lubricant or water.

With the machine off, spread the product over the surface using the pad. This coats the pad and the surface with product.

- Press the pad against the paint and turn the machine on. If using the Porter Cable 7424 polisher, set the speed dial between 3-1/2 and 4.
- Work the pad over the surface in a figure 8 pattern. Go over the area in a left-to-right figure 8 pattern and then an up-and-down figure 8 pattern.
- Go over the area several times or until the polish starts to dry.
- Inspect the results. Spray the surface with Pad Lubricant/Residue Remover(or a 50/50 solution of Isopropyl Alcohol and water) to remove compounding residues and wipe the area with a Microfiber towel. Run your fingertips over the surface. Is it smooth?
- Have the swirls been removed? If not, repeat the polishing and inspection procedure until the swirls are removed or until no further improvement can be observed. Tip: If you have a few stubborn swirls, increase the polisher’s speed limit to 5 to 5-1/2 and go over the problem areas until they are swirl-free.

Compounding may leave the surface slightly dull or hazy. This is normal. This dullness is removed by subsequent polishing with a finishing polish.
Applying a Compound or Polish using a circular polisher:

- Attach the proper pad to the Velcro backing plate of your machine polisher.
- Work on a small area, 18 to 24 inches square, out of direct sunlight.
- Apply two, 8 inch lines of compound or polish directly to the surface.
- Mist the pad very lightly with Pad Lubricant or water.

Apply compound or polish to paint.  
Attach the proper pad to your polisher.  
Mist pad with Pad Lubricant.

Spread product with machine off.  
Start with a speed of 1000 rpm.  
Work in a figure-8 pattern.

- With the machine off, spread the product over the surface using the pad. This coats the pad and the surface with product.
- Press the pad against the paint and turn the machine on. Set the speed dial on the polisher to a 1000 rpm limit.
- Work the pad over the surface in a figure 8 pattern. Go over the area in a left-to-right figure 8 pattern and then an up-and-down figure 8 pattern.
- Go over the area several times or until the compound starts to dry.
- Inspect the results. Spray the surface with a Pad Lubricant/Residue Remover (or a 50/50 solution of Isopropyl Alcohol and water) to remove compounding residues and wipe the area dry with a clean Microfiber towel. Run your fingertips over the surface. Is it smooth?
- Have the swirls been removed? If not, repeat the polishing and inspection procedure until the swirls are removed or until no further improvement can be observed. Tip: If you have a few stubborn swirls, increase the polisher’s speed limit to 1100 or 1200 rpm and go over the problem areas until they are swirl-free.

Compounding may leave the surface slightly dull or hazy. This is normal. This dullness is removed by subsequent polishing with a finishing polish.

Remove residues with a Pad Lubricant/Residue Remover and inspect the surface.
Applying a Glaze using a dual-action (Porter Cable 7424) polisher:

- Place a foam glazing pad on the backing plate and attach to your machine polisher.
- Work on a small area, 18 to 24 inches square, out of direct sunlight.
- Apply two, 8 inch lines of glaze directly to the surface.
- Mist the glazing pad with Pad Lubricant or water (may not be required with all glazes).

With the machine off, spread the glaze over the surface using the foam pad. This coats the glazing pad and the surface with product.

Press the glazing pad against the paint and turn the machine on. If using the Porter Cable 7424 polisher, set the speed dial between 3-1/2 and 4.

Work the pad over the surface in a figure 8 pattern. Go over the area in a left-to-right figure 8 pattern and then an up-and-down figure 8 pattern.

Go over the area several times or until the glaze starts to dry.

Wipe off residues with a dry Terry or Microfiber cloth and inspect the surface for uniform gloss. Do not use a Residue Remover or an alcohol/water mist to buff glaze residues. Continue glazing the next section until the entire vehicle is done. After glazing, inspect the vehicle for remaining films or residues in body seams. Finish with your favorite wax or paint sealant.
**Applying a glaze using a circular polisher:**

- Attach a foam glazing pad to the Velcro backing plate of your machine polisher.
- Work on a small area, 18 to 24 inches square, out of direct sunlight.
- Apply two, 8 inch lines of glaze directly to the surface.
- Mist the glazing pad with Pad Lubricant or water (may not be required with all glazes).

Apply glaze to paint surface.

Attach a glazing pad to the polisher.

Mist glazing pad with Pad Lubricant.

Spread glaze with machine off.

Start with a speed of 1000 rpm.

Work in a figure-8 pattern.

Wipe off residues and inspect the surface.

- With the machine off, spread the glaze over the surface using the foam pad. This coats the pad and the surface with product.
- Press the pad against the paint and turn the machine on. Set the speed dial on the polisher to a 1000 rpm limit.
- Work the pad over the surface in a figure 8 pattern. Go over the area in a left-to-right figure 8 pattern and then an up-and-down figure 8 pattern.
- Go over the area several times or until the glaze starts to dry.
- Wipe off residues with a dry Terry or Microfiber cloth and inspect the surface for uniform gloss. Do **not** use a Pad Lubricant/Residue Remover or an alcohol/water mist to buff glaze residues. Continue glazing the next section until the entire vehicle is done. After glazing, inspect the vehicle for remaining films or residues in body seams. Finish with your favorite wax or paint sealant.
Applying a wax or sealant using a dual-action (Porter Cable 7424) polisher:

- Place a foam finishing pad on the backing plate and attach to your machine polisher.
- Work on a small area, 18 to 24 inches square, out of direct sunlight.
- Apply two, 8 inch lines of wax or sealant directly to the surface.
- Mist finishing pad with Pad Lubricant or water (may not be required with all products).

Apply wax or sealant to paint.  
Put a foam finishing pad on machine's Velcro backing plate.  
Mist finishing pad with Pad Lubricant.

Spread product with machine off.  
Set the speed dial between 3-1/2 and 4.  
Work in a figure-8 pattern.

- With the machine off, spread wax over the surface using the foam pad. This coats the finishing pad and the surface with product.
- Press the finishing pad against the paint and turn the machine on. If using the Porter Cable 7424 polisher, set the speed dial between 3-1/2 and 4.
- Work the pad over the surface in a figure 8 pattern. Go over the area in a left-to-right figure 8 pattern and then an up-and-down figure 8 pattern.
- Go over the area several times or until the wax starts to dry.
- Buff off residues by hand using a dry Terry or Microfiber cloth (Microfiber buffing cloths work best) and inspect the surface. If you notice streaks, uneven gloss or haze, mist the surface with any quick detail spray and wipe with a Microfiber cloth.

Wipe off residues & inspect the surface.
Applying a wax or sealant using a circular polisher:

- Attach a foam finishing pad to the Velcro backing plate of your machine polisher.
- Work on a small area, 18 to 24 inches square, out of direct sunlight.
- Apply two, 8 inch lines of wax or sealant directly to the surface.
- Mist finishing pad with Pad Lubricant or water (may not be required with all products).

- With the machine off, spread wax over the surface using the foam pad. This coats the finishing pad and the surface with product.
- Press the pad against the paint and turn the machine on. Set the speed dial on the polisher to a 1000 rpm limit.
- Work the pad over the surface in a figure 8 pattern. Go over the area in a left-to-right figure 8 pattern and then an up-and-down figure 8 pattern.
- Go over the area several times or until the wax starts to dry.
- Buff off residues by hand using a dry Terry or Microfiber cloth (Microfiber buffing cloths work best) and inspect the surface. If you notice streaks, uneven gloss or haze, mist the surface with any quick detail spray and wipe with a Microfiber cloth.

Note: Some waxes and sealants should not be applied with a circular polisher. Check the instructions on your wax or sealant bottle.