

Polishing Headlight Lenses.

For a brighter view at night.

My wife had been bugging me to polish the faded and yellowed headlight lenses on her 1998 Mazda 626. It seems from the late 1990s until early 2000s the car makers used what I would call the wrong plastic for the headlight lens covers on our cars. Over time the Sun's rays turned them a dark yellow, and this greatly restricted the light being shined onto the road from the headlight bulb. With Winter coming, I wanted to do this to give her safer commuting.

There are two types of plastic cleaners. Some are chemical where they chemically eat away at the surface, and some are mechanical to where they "wear" away the faded surface. I chose the mechanical method in the form of a "Harbor Freight" lens cleaning kit which I got for under \$10.00 with a coupon.

If you look in the pictures below Left and Right you will see the kit and the components from inside. It contains two thin foam backed wet-sanding discs, one thick foam polishing pad, a stiff backing pad with a 1/4" shaft on it, and a plastic bottle of white polishing compound.



If you look at the picture below Left, you will see a badly hazed and yellowed headlight lens. The kit was easy to use, and the instructions were so simple even a "caveman" could follow them. Step 1 is shown in the picture below Right. I had the thin sanding/cleaning disk on the backing pad and in my 3/8" battery powered drill set at its highest RPM setting. All I had to do was keep a little water sprayed on the headlight lens cover and run this sanding/cleaning disc evenly over the lens for the 3 minutes it called for. I just kept the lens a little wet, didn't let it dry out, and this first step cleaned the yellow surface very well.



The picture below Left is during the 2nd polishing step. I put some of the polishing compound on the thicker polishing pad, kept a little water on the lens, and moved the pad all around on the lens surface. This 2nd step is to remove any scratches that may be in the lens surface and polished it like new. You can see in the picture below Right how well it restored the car's headlight lens to a very clear state!



The only thing lacking in the Harbor Freight Kit is a sealer/protectant for the plastic lens. But a couple applications of a good car wax with UV protectant in it will help keep the lens cover looking clear for a long time. Or you can buy one of the plastic protectants on the market. I did my Pick-Up Truck's lenses with one of these kits this Spring, and they still look good.

If your Miata, or other family vehicle, has yellowed headlight lenses, don't be afraid to clean and polish them. Your driving will be safer at night as you will be able to see better from the extra light. And as always, feel free to ask if you have any questions.

Zoom-Zoom, Clearly! Bill Latsha