

Buffing and Polishing

In the past I have sold many torches that I have restored. Several buyers have told me that they also restore torches but had not achieved the same results that I do after buffing. They asked me to explain how I do it.

First of all, I use a 1/2 horsepower motor with a 1/2" arbor and 6" buffing wheels. I took the motor out of an old refrigerator about 30 years ago. I have had only two motors in over 60 years. The 1/2 horsepower gives me all the power I need. As I mentioned in previous tips, I do most of my work outside. I made the motor portable by bolting it to a two foot long wooden 2x6. The 2x6 also gives me the addition height that enables me to use 5" and 6" buffing wheels. I use a "C" clamp to secure it to my work bench (an old picnic table).

On the non-ferrous metals I use two different grades of buffing compounds. I use a different set of buffing wheels for each. After I have cleaned the metal thoroughly, I first use a brown buffing compound "Dico Tripoli 531-TC6". This is a medium grade and will remove blemishes, high spots, shallow scratches, etc. It also gives the torch component the preliminary polish.

After that, I change wheels and use a finer grade buffing compound: "Dico 531-WR1" to polish the parts. This compound is white in color and gives it the high luster. I don't think there is a particular technique involved. I just make sure I have covered the part evenly. For small items such as the packing nut at the back of the burner, I attach it to the burner for buffing. I always make sure that the buffing wheel would turn it in the direction required to tighten the nut. If I buffed it in the opposite direction, the wheel could loosen it and it would potentially fly off.

For tanks, I usually place two buffing wheels on the arbor. This gives me a wider surface to work with. If I have to get into a small spot, I use only one. One buffing wheel is more flexible and easily gets into the area where the pump supports are fixed to the tank.

When I am buffing, I put a plastic recycle container behind the wheel to catch any item that might slip out of my hands. Some pieces are small and could easily get lost. The plastic container does a good job of catching them and preventing damage.

After the parts have been buffed there is still a lot of residue on them from the buffing compound. The compound gets into all the small holes, cracks, and crevices in the parts. I then clean them with a liquid solvent to remove the compound. I prefer to use Paint & Lacquer Thinner. It works well and dries fast. I usually just brush it on and then clean the parts with a dry rag. For parts like burners that have a lot of irregular surfaces, I use a toothbrush or a nylon detail brush to clean the parts with the solvent.

The final step is to hand polish the parts with Simichrome polish. I find this polish is the best and it doesn't leave a residue like Brasso, Noxon, etc. It's also good for polishing painted surfaces. It acts in the same way a very fine "Rubbing Compound" would work on automobile painted surfaces. I use it on torch painted wood handles all the time.

Dico 531-TC6 and 531-WR1 are solid compounds and come in a tube. They are readily available online. Simichrome Polish is also readily available online.

I recommend wearing rubber gloves for all the above processes. I should have started a long time ago. This stuff is tough on your skin. Please also wear eye protection.

Below is a picture of the setup I use for buffing and cleaning with wire wheels. Don't throw away that old picnic table!



Below is a photo of my buffing wheel with the optional parts catcher accessory. Not pretty, but it gets the job done.

