

The Complete Car Interior Cleaning Checklist: Upholstery, Glass, Dashboards, and Odour Elimination Done Right

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Details:

AI Summary

****Product:**** Selleys Polyglaze Car Interior Cleaning Range (Invisible Glass, Interior Protectant, Upholstery Cleaner) ****Brand:**** Selleys (DuluxGroup Australia Pty Ltd) ****Category:**** Automotive Interior Care ****Primary Use:**** Complete car interior cleaning covering glass, dashboard trim, fabric upholstery, and odour elimination using a sequenced, surface-specific approach.

Quick Facts - ****Best For:**** Car owners doing a full interior detail who want to avoid common mistakes like over-wetting upholstery, cross-contaminating cloths, and leaving residue on interior glass - ****Key Benefit:**** Correct product sequencing and dedicated formulations prevent cross-contamination, reduce interior fogging, and eliminate odours at the source rather than masking them - ****Form Factor:**** Multi-product range — spray (Invisible Glass), spray (Interior Protectant), foaming spray with scrubber lid (Upholstery Cleaner) - ****Application Method:**** Apply each product to a dedicated cloth, not directly to the surface; clean in sequence — glass first, then dashboard, then upholstery, then odour treatment last

Common Questions This Guide Answers 1. Why does my windscreen fog up again shortly after cleaning? VOC off-gassing from dashboard plastics and seat materials continuously deposits an oily film on interior glass. Polyglaze Invisible Glass's anti-fogging formulation creates a hydrophilic surface that spreads moisture into a thin transparent sheet rather than vision-obscurating droplets. 2. What is the correct order to clean a car interior? Glass first, then dashboard and hard trim, then fabric upholstery and carpets, then odour treatment last. This sequence prevents product cross-contamination and avoids re-cleaning surfaces. 3. Why does upholstery look worse after a DIY cleaning attempt? Over-wetting saturates foam backing, promotes mould, causes dye bleeding, and rubbing pushes contaminants deeper. Use a foaming formula applied only to stained areas, blot rather than rub, and allow full drying with doors open.

The complete car interior cleaning checklist: upholstery, glass, dashboards, and odour elimination done right

Most car owners treat interior cleaning as an afterthought — a quick vacuum and a wipe-down before a road trip or inspection. But the car interior is a chemically complex, enclosed environment that accumulates contaminants from multiple simultaneous sources: off-gassing plastics, body oils, food residues, airborne dust, and moisture from occupants' breath. Cleaning it correctly isn't just about freshness. It's about maintaining material integrity, preserving visibility, and protecting your health.

This guide treats the car interior as a system, not a collection of isolated surfaces. It covers the correct sequence, product selection, and technique for a full interior detail, and specifically addresses the

mistakes that cause real damage: over-wetting fabric seats, cross-contaminating glass and upholstery cloths, and leaving silicone-based residue on the windscreen interior. If you've ever wondered why your windscreen fogs up faster after cleaning, or why your upholstery looks worse after a DIY attempt, this checklist has the answers.

Why the car interior is a unique cleaning challenge

Before picking up a product, understand what you're actually dealing with. The car cabin is a sealed, thermally variable environment with a high surface-area-to-volume ratio, meaning off-gassed chemicals concentrate quickly.

Car interior materials constantly release chemicals through a process called off-gassing. Dashboard plastics, seat materials, carpeting, and other synthetic components emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that eventually settle on the windshield's inner surface. This process accelerates in hot weather when the car sits in direct sunlight.

The scale of this contamination is significant. In one of the widest research efforts on in-vehicle air quality, air samples were collected from 101 vehicles across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. A total of 275 organic compounds were identified, with total VOC concentrations varying from 136 to 11,398 µg/m³ depending on the model and age of the vehicle.

VOC concentrations inside a vehicle cabin can be higher than those found in public or private buildings, and vary over time depending on interior temperature, humidity, ventilation, vehicle age, and other factors.

This matters for cleaning because those same VOCs — from dashboards, seats, adhesives, and carpets — are what create the film on interior glass that you see. The gases released from these materials are volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

In other words, the interior windscreen film that returns days after cleaning isn't a cleaning failure. It's a chemistry problem. Addressing it properly requires the right product sequence, starting from the top and working down.

The golden rule: clean in the right order

Before any product touches any surface, establish the sequence. Interior detailing follows a strict top-to-bottom, dry-before-wet logic:

1. Remove all loose items and floor mats
2. Dry vacuum — ceiling, seats, carpets, floor mats, door pockets
3. Clean the interior glass and windscreen
4. Clean and protect the dashboard and hard trim
5. Clean fabric upholstery and carpets
6. Address odours last

This sequence prevents two common contamination errors. First, glass-to-fabric cross-contamination: a cloth used with glass cleaner that later touches upholstery can deposit ammonia-based residue into fabric fibres, setting stains and compromising foam structure. Second, upholstery product on glass: foam-based fabric cleaners or silicone-containing protectants smeared onto glass create a greasy film that worsens fogging and streaking.

Use dedicated cloths for each zone and colour-code them if needed. Never use the same microfibre cloth on glass that you've used on a dashboard protectant. Professional results depend on it.

Step 1: Interior glass and windscreen — the most overlooked surface

Why interior glass is harder to clean than exterior glass

The interior windscreen is one of the most technically demanding surfaces in the car. Unlike the exterior, which is rinsed with water and wiped in open air, the interior surface accumulates a composite film from multiple sources simultaneously.

VOCs released by new materials inside the vehicle are a primary cause of internal coating formation. In high-temperature environments especially, they volatilise more readily. After cooling, these gases condense on the inner side of the windows, forming an oil film or fog layer.

Cigarette and vape smoke both leave behind a stubborn film that's hard to remove. Body oils transferred from fingers when adjusting the rear-view mirror or touching the glass add another layer.

The result is a semi-transparent oily layer that acts as a nucleation site, providing countless tiny surfaces for water droplets to form on. A clean, smooth glass surface is less likely to fog as quickly or as densely as a dirty one because it offers fewer anchor points for condensation to begin.

The correct windscreen interior cleaning process

****What to use:**** [Selleys Polyglaze Invisible Glass](<https://selleys.com.au/products/car-care/glass-and-windscreen/polyglaze-invisible-glass>) — a purpose-formulated automotive glass cleaner with an anti-fogging formulation. Polyglaze Invisible Glass makes light work of cleaning glass, windscreens, mirrors, and chrome surfaces, and the anti-fogging formulation ensures a clear view in cold or damp weather. Its formula is specifically designed to remove oily windscreen film, deliver streak-free results, and provide anti-fogging performance.

****Step-by-step process:****

1. ****Fold a clean, dry microfibre cloth into quarters.**** This gives you multiple clean faces to work with and prevents re-depositing dissolved film back onto the glass. 2. ****Spray Polyglaze Invisible Glass onto the cloth, not directly onto the windscreen.**** Direct spraying risks overspray settling on the dashboard or instrument cluster. 3. ****Wipe in overlapping horizontal passes**** across the full width of the windscreen, working from the passenger side where reach is easier. 4. ****Flip to a dry face of the cloth**** and buff immediately in a circular motion to eliminate streaking. 5. ****Check your work at an angle**** — hold a torch or use the sun at a low angle to reveal any remaining haze. 6. ****Repeat on side windows and the rear screen****, using fresh cloth faces each time.

> ■■ ****Critical mistake to avoid:**** Do not use household glass cleaners containing ammonia on car interior glass. Greasy or ammonia-based cleaners leave a film that increases fogging. Ammonia can also damage window tint films and degrade rubber seals around the glass perimeter. Use the right product and get it right the first time.

The anti-fog benefit in cold and damp conditions

When warm, humid air inside the car meets cold windshield glass, moisture condenses into tiny water droplets, forming fog. This is common in colder weather when the car's interior is warmer than the outside air. The anti-fogging chemistry in Polyglaze Invisible Glass works by creating a hydrophilic (water-attracting) surface that causes moisture to spread into a thin, transparent sheet rather than beading into vision-obscuring droplets. This is particularly relevant for Australian drivers during winter mornings and in high-humidity coastal conditions, where interior fogging is an immediate safety hazard.

Step 2: Dashboard, hard trim, and console

Understanding the surfaces

The dashboard and surrounding trim are typically polypropylene (PP), ABS plastic, and sometimes vinyl or leatherette. Sources of VOCs include rubber, natural or artificial leather, textiles, fibres, polyurethane foams, coatings, and adhesives — all used in components including the dashboard, steering wheel, insulations, seats, and upholstery. The dashboard isn't just a surface to clean; it's an active emitter that benefits from conditioning and protection.

Correct dashboard cleaning technique

****What to use:**** [Selleys Polyglaze Interior Protectant](<https://www.selleys.com.au/products/car-care/polyglaze-interior-protectant/>). Selleys Polyglaze Interior Protectant cleans, shines, and protects your dash and trim. It works on vinyl, leather, rubber, and plastic for an instant shine, doesn't leave an oily residue, and keeps your car looking like new.

****Step-by-step process:****

1. ****Dry-dust first**** using a soft detailing brush or clean microfibre cloth to dislodge loose particles from vents, seams, and crevices. Vacuuming these areas before wiping prevents grinding abrasive particles into soft trim surfaces. 2. ****Spray Polyglaze Interior Protectant onto a clean cloth**** — never directly onto the dashboard, as overspray onto glass surfaces will require re-cleaning the windscreen. 3. ****Wipe in straight passes****, working section by section across the dashboard from left to right. 4. ****Use a cotton swab or detailing brush**** for vent slats, button edges, and textured trim areas. 5. ****Buff lightly**** with a dry cloth to achieve a consistent, non-greasy finish.

> ■■ ****Critical mistake to avoid:**** Wipe overspray off glass areas immediately. Protectant residue on glass is one of the most common causes of persistent interior streaking and accelerated fogging. If any product reaches the windscreen, clean that glass zone again with Polyglaze Invisible Glass before the protectant cures.

The dashboard must be cleaned before the upholstery. Dust and product overspray from the dash will inevitably fall onto the seats — cleaning upholstery first means doing the seats twice.

Step 3: Fabric upholstery and carpets — the over-wetting problem

Why over-wetting is the number one upholstery mistake

Fabric car seats are constructed in layers: the outer woven fabric, a foam backing, and in many cases a moisture barrier membrane. When too much liquid is applied — whether water, cleaning product, or a combination — it saturates through the fabric into the foam layer. Wet foam takes hours (sometimes 24+) to dry fully in a closed car, creates an ideal environment for mould and mildew growth, causes odours that are significantly harder to eliminate than the original stain, and can cause dye bleeding in coloured upholstery.

[Polyglaze Upholstery

Cleaner](<https://www.selleys.com.au/products/car-care/polyglaze-upholstery-cleaner/>) effortlessly cleans up mess, stains, and odours from having food, pets, or dirt in your car, and leaves a fresh fragrance so you can always feel comfortable being in the car. Its foaming spray format minimises liquid penetration while maximising surface agitation — the foam lifts and suspends soils rather than driving them deeper with excess water.

The correct upholstery cleaning process

****What to use:**** Selleys Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner — a foaming spray that removes dirt, mud, and stubborn stains, eliminates odours, and works on all cloth and velour seats plus carpets. It features a scrubber lid for tough stains.

****Step-by-step process:****

1. ****Vacuum thoroughly first.**** Remove all loose debris, crumbs, and surface dust. Cleaning without vacuuming first turns loose dirt into a muddy paste when wet. 2. ****Pre-test on an inconspicuous area**** for colourfastness, especially on darker or aged fabric. 3. ****Apply the foam directly to the stained area**** — do not saturate. The foam should sit on the surface, not pool. 4. ****Agitate with the built-in scrubber lid**** for stubborn stains, working in a circular motion from the outside of the stain inward to prevent spreading. 5. ****Blot — do not rub — with a clean, dry microfibre cloth**** to lift the dissolved soil. Rubbing pushes contaminants deeper into the weave and can cause pilling on velour. 6. ****Allow to air dry with doors open.**** Do not close the car until the treated area is fully dry to the touch. 7. ****Repeat for persistent stains.**** For deep stains such as grease and heavy soiling, the product can return cloth to near-original colour, though tough stains may need a couple of applications and scrubbing.

****For carpets and floor mats:**** Remove mats from the car entirely before cleaning. Cleaning them in place traps moisture underneath, promoting mould on the carpet underlay and metal floor. Allow mats to dry fully in the sun before replacing.

Step 4: Odour elimination — treating the source, not the symptom

Why air fresheners don't solve odour problems

Air fresheners are masking agents. They add a competing fragrance to override an unpleasant one, but the source of the odour remains active. In a sealed car interior, the odour source — mould in upholstery foam, food residue in carpet fibres, pet dander in seat weave — will always outlast the air freshener. True odour elimination requires removing the biological or chemical source.

Over 60 different VOCs have been detected in car interiors, coming from plastics, mouldings, carpeting, upholstery, adhesives, lubricants, petrol, and leather and vinyl treatment. Many of the compounds that create "bad car smell" — including ethylbenzene, styrene, and toluene — are the same VOCs emitted by interior materials. Some odours are structural, not just surface-level.

Odour elimination checklist

| Odour Type | Source | Treatment Approach | |---|---|---| | Musty/mildew | Wet foam in seats or carpet underlay | Deep clean with Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner; dry thoroughly; treat with odour eliminator | | Food/organic | Residue in seat weave or carpet pile | Vacuum first; foam clean; blot; air dry | | Smoke/vape | Film on glass, fabric, and headliner | Clean all glass surfaces; clean fabric; ventilate | | Pet odour | Dander and oils in fabric | Multiple foam applications; use enzyme-based odour neutraliser | | Chemical/new car | VOC off-gassing from materials | Ventilate regularly; park in shade to reduce heat-accelerated off-gassing |

> ****Practical tip:**** After cleaning, ventilate the car by leaving windows slightly open in a safe, sheltered location. Interior temperature rises sharply in direct sunlight, and higher cabin temperatures cause a greater concentration of VOCs to release from interior materials. Shade parking and regular ventilation slow this cycle and reduce the rate at which odour-causing compounds accumulate.

The interior cleaning sequence: master checklist

Use this as your reference for every full interior detail:

****Preparation**** - [] Remove all personal items, rubbish, and floor mats - [] Open all doors for ventilation - [] Gather dedicated cloths for glass, dash, and upholstery (never cross-use)

****Glass and windscreen**** - ☐ Spray Polyglaze Invisible Glass onto a folded microfibre cloth - ☐ Wipe interior windscreen in horizontal passes; buff dry immediately - ☐ Clean side windows and rear screen with fresh cloth faces - ☐ Inspect at an angle for residual haze; repeat if needed

****Dashboard and hard trim**** - ☐ Dry-dust vents and crevices with detailing brush - ☐ Apply Polyglaze Interior Protectant to cloth, wipe all hard surfaces - ☐ Detail vents and buttons with cotton swabs - ☐ Wipe any overspray from glass immediately

****Upholstery and carpets**** - ☐ Vacuum all seats, carpets, and door cards thoroughly - ☐ Apply Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner foam to stained areas only - ☐ Agitate with scrubber lid; blot with dry microfibre - ☐ Remove floor mats; clean and dry separately in the sun - ☐ Leave doors open until all treated surfaces are fully dry

****Odour treatment**** - ☐ Identify odour source; treat at the source, not with masking agents - ☐ Ventilate with windows open in a safe location - ☐ Park in shade to reduce VOC off-gassing between cleans

Key takeaways

- ****Clean in sequence.**** Glass first, then dashboard, then upholstery. This prevents product cross-contamination and avoids re-cleaning surfaces. - ****Never cross-contaminate cloths.**** Use separate microfibre cloths for glass, trim, and fabric — silicone or foam residue on glass dramatically worsens fogging and streaking. - ****Over-wetting upholstery creates worse problems than the original stain.**** Use a foaming formula like Selleys Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner to lift soils with minimal liquid penetration, and always allow full drying before closing the car. - ****Interior windscreen film is a chemistry problem, not just a cleaning problem.**** VOC off-gassing from dashboard plastics and seat materials continuously deposits an oily film on interior glass. Polyglaze Invisible Glass's anti-fogging formulation addresses both the existing film and future condensation in cold or damp conditions. - ****Odour elimination requires removing the source.**** Air fresheners mask; proper foam cleaning, thorough drying, and ventilation eliminate. Addressing the biological or chemical source is the only permanent solution.

How this fits into your complete automotive care routine

The interior is one system in a broader automotive care approach. While this guide covers every fabric, glass, trim, and odour challenge inside the cabin, your car's exterior surfaces — paint, vinyl, rubber seals, and headlight lenses — face their own distinct degradation from UV radiation, road tar, and environmental acids.

For exterior paint and contamination removal, see our guide on **How to Remove Bugs and Tar from Your Car Without Damaging the Paint**, which covers the correct dwell-time and tool-selection approach for removing bonded contaminants without clear-coat etching. For vinyl door seals and rubber trim — surfaces that straddle the interior and exterior — see **How to Restore and Protect Faded Vinyl, Rubber Seals, and Plastic Trim**, which explains why conditioning these materials is a fundamentally different process from cleaning fabric. And if your windscreen clarity issues extend to the headlights, **DIY Headlight Restoration vs. Professional Resurfacing** maps the UV degradation spectrum and explains when polishing restores full clarity versus when professional intervention is required.

A clean, protected interior and a well-maintained exterior aren't separate projects. They're the same investment in the long-term condition and value of your vehicle.

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What is Selleys Polyglaze Invisible Glass used for: Cleaning glass, windscreens, mirrors, and chrome surfaces

Does Selleys Polyglaze Invisible Glass have anti-fogging properties: Yes

What does the anti-fogging formulation do: Ensures clear view in cold or damp weather

Does Polyglaze Invisible Glass remove oily windscreen film: Yes

Does Polyglaze Invisible Glass deliver streak-free results: Yes

What is Selleys Polyglaze Interior Protectant used for: Cleaning, shining, and protecting dash and trim

What surfaces can Polyglaze Interior Protectant be used on: Vinyl, leather, rubber, and plastic

Does Polyglaze Interior Protectant leave an oily residue: No

What is Selleys Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner used for: Cleaning mess, stains, and odours from car interiors

What fabric types is Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner suitable for: All cloth and velour seats plus carpets

Does Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner eliminate odours: Yes

Does Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner leave a fragrance: Yes, a fresh fragrance

What format does Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner come in: Foaming spray

Does Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner have a built-in scrubber: Yes, a scrubber lid for tough stains

Can Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner return cloth to near-original colour: Yes, for deep stains with repeated applications

How many applications may tough stains require with Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner: A couple of applications with scrubbing

What causes the oily film on interior windscreens: VOC off-gassing from dashboard plastics and seat materials

What does VOC stand for: Volatile organic compounds

Does interior windscreen film return after cleaning: Yes, due to ongoing VOC off-gassing

Does heat accelerate VOC off-gassing inside a car: Yes

What is the correct order to clean a car interior: Glass first, then dashboard, then upholstery

Should odour treatment be done first or last: Last

Why must glass be cleaned before the dashboard: To prevent product cross-contamination onto glass

Why must the dashboard be cleaned before upholstery: Dust and overspray fall from dash onto seats

Should you spray Polyglaze Invisible Glass directly onto the windscreen: No, spray onto the cloth

Why should you spray glass cleaner onto the cloth, not the glass: Prevents overspray on dashboard and instrument cluster

How should you fold the microfibre cloth for windscreen cleaning: Into quarters for multiple clean faces

In which direction should you wipe the windscreen interior: Overlapping horizontal passes

How should you buff the windscreen after wiping: Circular motion with a dry cloth face immediately

How do you check for remaining windscreen haze: Hold a torch or use sun at a low angle

Should you use the same cloth for glass and dashboard: No, use dedicated cloths for each zone

Can you use household ammonia-based glass cleaners on car interior glass: No

Why should ammonia-based cleaners be avoided on car glass: They leave a film that increases fogging

Can ammonia damage window tint films: Yes

Can ammonia damage rubber seals around glass: Yes

Should you spray Polyglaze Interior Protectant directly onto the dashboard: No, spray onto a cloth

What should you do if Interior Protectant overspray reaches the windscreen: Wipe off immediately and re-clean with Invisible Glass

What tool helps clean dashboard vents and button edges: Cotton swab or detailing brush

What is the number one upholstery cleaning mistake: Over-wetting the fabric

What happens when foam backing in seats gets saturated: Can take 24+ hours to dry fully

Does wet foam in car seats promote mould growth: Yes

Can over-wetting cause dye bleeding in upholstery: Yes

Should you rub or blot upholstery after applying foam cleaner: Blot only

Why should you not rub upholstery when cleaning: Rubbing pushes contaminants deeper and causes pilling

Should floor mats be cleaned inside or outside the car: Outside the car, removed entirely

Why should floor mats be removed before cleaning: Cleaning in situ traps moisture and promotes mould underneath

Should car doors be left open after upholstery cleaning: Yes, until all treated surfaces are fully dry

Do air fresheners eliminate car odours: No, they only mask odours

What is required to truly eliminate car odours: Removing the biological or chemical source

What causes musty or mildew odour in cars: Wet foam in seats or carpet underlay

What is the treatment for smoke or vape odour in a car: Clean all glass surfaces, clean fabric, and ventilate

What causes new car smell: VOC off-gassing from interior materials

How can you reduce VOC off-gassing between cleans: Park in shade and ventilate regularly

Does shade parking slow VOC off-gassing: Yes

How many organic compounds were identified in a study of vehicles across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region: 275 organic compounds

Can VOC concentrations inside cars be higher than in buildings: Yes

What does the anti-fogging chemistry in Polyglaze Invisible Glass do to moisture: Causes it to spread into a thin transparent sheet instead of droplets

What is the technical term for a surface that attracts water to spread thinly: Hydrophilic

Does a dirty windscreen fog faster than a clean one: Yes

Why does a dirty windscreen fog faster: Contaminants act as nucleation sites for water droplet formation

Should you vacuum before applying upholstery cleaner: Yes

Why must you vacuum before wet-cleaning upholstery: Wet cleaning without vacuuming turns loose dirt into muddy paste

Should you pre-test upholstery cleaner on an inconspicuous area: Yes, for colourfastness

Should you apply upholstery foam to the entire seat or stained areas only: Stained areas only

How should you agitate stubborn upholstery stains: Circular motion from outside the stain inward

Why work from the outside of a stain inward: To prevent spreading the stain

Should floor mats dry in sun or shade: In the sun

How many VOCs have been detected in car interiors across studies: Over 60 different VOCs

Label Facts Summary

> ****Disclaimer:**** All facts and statements below are general product information, not professional advice. Consult relevant experts for specific guidance.

Verified Label Facts

****Selleys Polyglaze Invisible Glass**** - Product use: Cleaning glass, windscreens, mirrors, and chrome surfaces - Contains anti-fogging formulation - Anti-fogging formulation function: Ensures clear view in cold or damp weather

****Selleys Polyglaze Interior Protectant**** - Product use: Cleaning, shining, and protecting dash and trim - Compatible surfaces: Vinyl, leather, rubber, and plastic - Does not leave an oily residue

****Selleys Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner**** - Product use: Cleaning mess, stains, and odours from car interiors - Compatible fabric types: All cloth and velour seats, plus carpets - Format: Foaming spray - Features a scrubber lid for tough stains - Leaves a fresh fragrance - Eliminates odours - Tough stains (e.g. grease, heavy soiling) may require a couple of applications with scrubbing - Can return cloth to near-original colour with repeated applications on deep stains

General Product Claims

****Selleys Polyglaze Invisible Glass**** - Removes oily windscreen film - Delivers streak-free results - Anti-fogging chemistry creates a hydrophilic surface that causes moisture to spread into a thin, transparent sheet rather than beading into vision-obscuring droplets - Greasy or ammonia-based cleaners leave a film that increases fogging (comparative/avoidance claim) - A clean windscreen is less likely to fog as quickly or as densely as a dirty one

****Selleys Polyglaze Interior Protectant**** - Keeps car looking like new - Overspray onto glass surfaces requires re-cleaning the windscreen

****Selleys Polyglaze Upholstery Cleaner**** - Foaming spray format minimises liquid penetration while maximising surface agitation - Foam lifts and suspends soils rather than driving them deeper with excess water - Effortlessly cleans up mess, stains, and odours from food, pets, or dirt - Leaves occupants feeling comfortable in the car