



How To Paint The Front Grill and Rear License Plate Surround

BEFORE PROCEEDING READ THE FOLLOWING DISCLAIMER:

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Your mileage may vary on what you want to paint but this How To is how I approached it. I have performed major body work and paint on vehicles in the past so I have used my experiences to paint these parts. Also, make sure that the weather or area you are working in is at least below 50% humidity and the temperature is around 70°F. You will need to wear a respirator and goggles if the area is not fully vented.

PaintScratch.com was my paint source. You can buy the paint from them in various sizes but I got the 12.5 oz spray can with flex additive. The flex additive is for any surface other than metal. You will need to have them add this to the paint if you plan to paint plastics or other non-metal objects. First things first! Locate your vehicle sticker on the inside door frame on the drivers side. This will tell you two things you will need to order the paint. First is the VIN and the other is the exterior paint code. The picture below shows where to locate the items.





Secondly, go to PaintScratch.com and order the paint for your car. Here was my invoice for the paint:

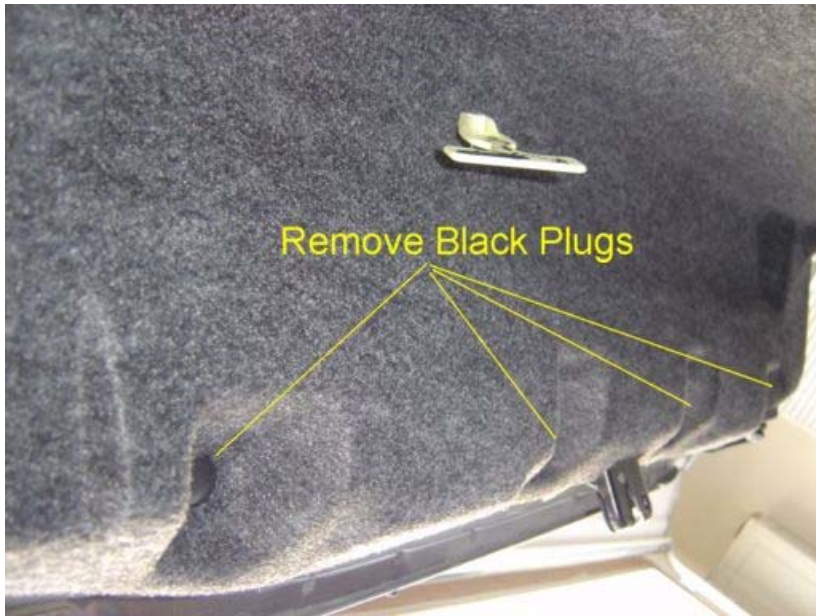
Vehicle: 2001 Lincoln All Other Models
Paint: Midnight Gray Metallic Clearcoat TV/M6852 (Add Flex)
1 12.5 oz. Basecoat Spray Can @29.95 \$29.95
1 12.5 oz. Clearcoat Spray Can @15.00 \$15.00
1 12.5 oz. Primer Spray Can @15.00 \$15.00
Handling: \$4.95
Total Order: \$64.90

When you get your order it will look something like this:

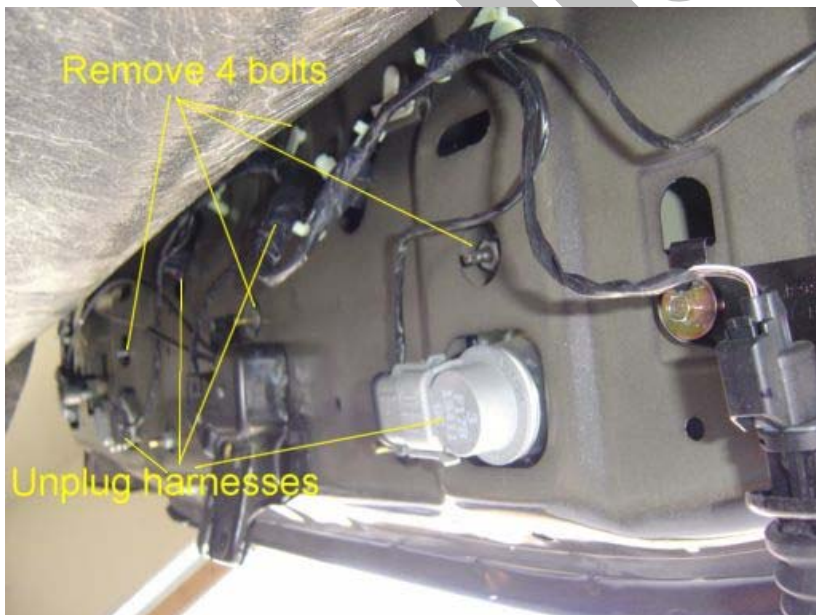


You probably noticed the pack of wet/dry sanding paper. You will need to get this at a local automotive store. You will need grit numbers 220, 360, 600 and 1,000.

Now we are ready to begin taking off the grille and license plate surround. The grille is simple. Just take off the four (4) bolts that hold the grille on and use a pair of pliers to compress the metal clips holding the bottom part of the grille. The grille should just come right off. The license plate surround is a little more in depth. First, take out the six (6) black retaining plugs underneath the trunk. You may have to use a flat head screwdriver to pry them apart enough to use a pair of pliers.



Next, take off the four (4) bolts holding the license plate surround. Take out the back up and the license plate light harness plugs. You should be able to just pull on the surround to take it out.





You should have something that looks like this:



I took the back up and license plate lights out so that I would have less to tape up. Using masking tape, tape up the things you don't want painted.



You are now ready to start the prep work. Taking the 220 grit sandpaper start sanding the parts so that every shiny area is no longer shiny. It needs to be scuffed up really good. This is very important! After you have roughed up the shiny areas clean the area with either alcohol or PaintScratch.com's Wax and Grease Remover. I used alcohol with no problems. Also, make sure the areas are free of dust. Now, it's time to apply the primer. Primer is made to stick to unpainted surfaces and paint is designed to stick to primer. Primer can also be used to fill small imperfections in the surface. **DO NOT SKIP THIS STEP!**



Apply a couple of good coats of primer so that the areas are covered well. Wait about 10 minutes between coats. Once you have applied the last coat wait about 30-45 minutes before sanding. You will need to use the 600 grit wet/dry sandpaper to sand the primer so that you have a smooth surface. You will need to use some water with the sand paper. Do not sand down to the un-painted surface. You need to make sure you have a smooth surface for the basecoat.

After sanding use a tack rag to remove any dust or particles on the surface areas. Be careful not to touch the areas with your hands so that contaminants don't get on the prepared surface areas. You are now ready to paint the basecoat. If you got the 12.5 oz spray cans you will need to make sure that the can is sufficiently shaken up. It says on the can to shake for 1 minute but I would do it for 5 minutes just to make sure it's mixed up well. If you got the paint from PaintScratch.com they will provide a couple extra nozzles but you'll only need just one. Spray even wet coats of basecoat. Two wet coats should be sufficient. Allow each coat to dry 20 minutes before recoating. Some colors require more paint. Don't worry about making it shine. This is what the clearcoat is for.



Now you're ready for clearcoat. Let the paint dry for at least one hour and then spray the clearcoat. Spray the clearcoat beyond the basecoat to a good stopping point such as the edge of the panel. Two wet coats should be sufficient. I put three wet coats on because I planned to color sand the grille and license surround later down the road for that deeper shine.

Let the clearcoat dry for at least six to seven hours. I let it dry overnight for about 12-14 hours but it depends on your weather conditions. Use Rubbing Compound (apply with clean soft cotton only, paper products or dirty fabrics will scratch your paint surface) to smooth and shine the area. Without this step, the paint will not shine properly.



I used 3M Rubbing Compound Fine Cut and 3M Swirl Mark Remover for Dark Colored Cars. You can get these in most automotive stores. You will need to use the rubbing compound until you reach the shine you desire. After this use the swirl mark remover to remove any scratches or swirl marks. **BE CAREFUL AROUND THE EDGES!** You will take more paint off on edges with the rubbing compound.



Once you have reached your desired shine you can take the masking tape off and re-install. The finished product will look like this:



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You will need to wait 30 days for the paint to fully cure and dry before waxing it. I plan to color sand the grille and license plate surround with 1,500 grit wet/sand paper and rubbing compound to enhance the shine once it is completely dry. This is the street rod secret to those deep paint finishes you see.

Some parting words: Make sure the surfaces are clean. Prep them well. Watch out for drips. And put some elbow grease into the rubbing compound to make it SHINE!

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