

Do We Even Need an Auto Body Shop? 4 DIY Tries

If you've ever damaged your car's exterior, and avoided the body shop, you've probably gotten a lot of advice. A plunger can straighten that out! You can fix it with boiling water or a hair dryer! We evaluate a few of the most popular DIY fixes, and let you know if they made the grade.

Taking the Plunge

Online videos have shown examples where a plunger worked but do you maybe need a specific dent for it to succeed? We decided to randomly make our own medium dent—with a hammer—and then see if we could easily plunge our way to “good as new.” Well, we plunged...and plunged...and...

Our plunger seems only to be good for a toilet bowl. We were hoping for a suction savior but all it did was make us sing “Lollipop” when it popped out.

Grade: F (though also F for Fun)

Does It Remove More than Polish?

They don't quite say nail polish remover eliminates minor scratches but people claim it can cover them up. Putting it to the test with a high-tech device—a car key!—we somewhat agree. Put the polish on smoothly—we glopped a little at first—and it's obvious that if you match the colors well—we didn't—then you'd have to look closely to tell there's even a scratch. Our assessment? A quick cheap way to forget the annoyance of a minor auto blemish.

Grade: B+

Air and Hair

Another popular trick is to use a hair dryer and compressed air for small dents. After more shots from the hammer on our poor door (which was oh so loud), we plugged in and spent several minutes blowdrying in a circle of high heat. Then we sprayed our air repeatedly, cleaned and observed.

Though the dent wasn't completely gone, we have to admit that it looked a little smaller. This wouldn't be for the perfectionist but it might be for those who don't mind getting by until their next set of wheels.

Grade C-

Let's Boil!

Another variation is to swap in boiling water for the hair dryer. Well, we got the flame rising, never added pasta (though we were tempted) and made our final dent.

Somewhere between the success of the hair dryer and total failure is where this stands. Though we found boiling water had an effect, even the laziest of car owners will probably not be satisfied.

Grade: D/D+

Just Scratching the Surface?

Though you may consider trying these tricks, remember that we didn't measure for rust over time or other possible negatives which could result by taking the "easy way." If you want a guarantee, you'll need an auto body professional—and, even then, get it in writing!