

Restoring a Swiss Army Knife: From the Cellidor Scales to the Stainless Steel Blades

Below is a method I have used many times to restore Swiss Army Knives to “near mint” condition. The cellidor (plastic) material that the scales (handles) are made from and the high quality polished stainless steel the blades/tools are made from lend themselves to restoration with magnificent results! This method can be used on knives that have been heavily carried with a lot of fairly deep scratches on the scales from “pocket wear” and even on blades that have been poorly sharpened or heavily scratched by use or misuse. You will simply be amazed at the results on almost any SAK that is in good sound mechanical condition to start with regardless of the poor aesthetics the knife may have due to use.

1. Go to your local auto parts store and buy auto body sandpaper starting out with about 600 grit which is good for even the worst scratches. Anything coarser is too harsh. Get 800, 1000, 1500 and 2000 also...
2. Start out with the grit that is suitable depending on the severity of the scratches and work yourself up through the highest number. For minor pocket wear on relatively new knives you won't have to use more than about the 1500 and 2000.

Note the idea is to take the deepest scratches from use out with the coarsest grit you start with and each successive higher number will remove the scratches from the sandpaper used in each step before.

Also note that you may have to use a certain grit of sandpaper several times before moving on to the next highest number. These finer grits of sandpaper wear out quickly. I usually cut them into tiny rectangles just large enough to hold easily so not to waste more paper than I need.

3. Next, use a polishing compound (Happich Semichrome Polish or something similar) by hand only with a clean rag with small weave like a t-shirt. Plastic polishes from the auto parts store or aluminum polish for “mag” wheels will also work but the Happich Semichrome polish I have found to be the best for both metal and plastic.

4. Finish up with a car polish like Liquid Glass and you will be astonished at your results...

As stated above, this method will also work on blades and tools that have been poorly sharpened or abused and are scratched severely... You can restore them to a near factory finish also. However, it takes a bit longer and you have to have more patience when working with the stainless steel blades.

Each time I use the above method I am astonished at the results... You can actually take a knife that is mechanically sound but looks like “hell” and restore it to one in condition that most anyone would be proud to have in a collection. You can take a knife that is in such poor condition that you would consider it to be a “user” and turn it into a show piece for your collection.

This method works on both Victorinox and Wenger brands and vintage knives as well as newer ones. It is extremely useful on vintage knives since obviously they are no longer made and you may not be able to find one in great condition suitable for a collection.

There are kits you can buy for plastics that use a similar process but I think you will probably have to order them and they are fairly expensive... I priced one at a local plastics fabrication company in my area but I don't think they are very common.

Good Luck and Best Regards,
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Addendum: I cannot imagine a better result with the kit than I get with the above described method... See examples of before and after photographs on the next page.



Wenger
Vintage: Late 1960s
93mm
Hidden Rivets
Shackle
Federal Shield w/Cross