

TECH TIP: LINT-FREE RAGS

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When you really need one, the most difficult thing to find around the house or workshop can be a good lint-free rag. Seems like whatever I try to use always leaves some kind of pesky little pieces of fiber, shreds of cloth, or even small chunks of paper stuck to places where they shouldn't be. For years I've tried, with varying degrees of difficulty (and lint remnants), to use the classic red shop rags, well washed terrycloth towels or washcloths, old tee shirts or baby diapers, the blue paper shop towels, and even just regular white paper towels. And while all of these items were fairly lint-free in some applications, they all were less than ideal in others.

But I think I've finally come across something that seems to be truly lint-free in every application I've tried so far, and that's the relatively new **micro-fiber cloth rags** that now seem to be showing up in all the auto parts stores. Shell gas stations here in Northern Virginia were even giving them away free with each fill-up about a year ago.

So far, I've used these micro-fiber towels to wash and dry my cars, apply wax and to polish the cars, and used them as shop rags to wipe down parts when I'm building engines. I've soaked them with all sorts of garage-type solvents from gasoline to carburetor cleaners to gum cutter and even to acetone (which causes any paper-type towels to disintegrate as you're using them). Up to this point I

haven't come across any solvents that cause the micro-fiber cloth to deteriorate at all, although you should always test any solvents on a piece of micro-fiber cloth before using it. Unlike other towels I've used, they just don't leave any shreds or lint anywhere, even on sharp corners or edges of metal. Like any other towel, they will "catch" on burrs and sharp edges, but somehow they just don't seem to come apart or leave any lint at all, as do all the other types of towels and rags I've used.



Another really good thing about the micro-fiber cloths is that, no matter how dirty, oily, or nasty they get, I just throw them into the washing machine and dryer along with rest of my dirty work clothes or coveralls, and they come out clean and ready for the next job (although some of the black engine assembly lubricants that I use do leave some permanent faint stains on the cloths).

Just one word of caution, as with any cloth rag, the micro-fiber cloth does tend to pick up and retain small metal chips (if you've been drilling, grinding or filing any metal items), so I keep the cloths I use for that kind of work separate from the ones I use to wash/wax/polish the cars.

