



FAMILY HANDYMAN

How to Use a Pressure Washer

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 Complexity
Beginner

Tools Required

- Rags
- Safety glasses

Materials Required

- Special detergent for pressure washers

Watch How to Use a Pressure Washer

How to Use a Pressure Washer



Project step-by-step (7)

Step 1

Hook Up the Pressure Washer

It's worth taking a moment to make sure your water supply can deliver the gallons per minute specified for your machine.

If your not sure whether or not your source can supply enough pressure, it's easy to test. Time how long it takes your hose to fill a 5-gallon bucket. If it takes two minutes or less, you'll be fine, since most pressure washers need 2-1/2 gallon per minute to work.

To ensure that water circulates unobstructed through the system, check the water inlet filter or screen and clean it of debris. Also, make sure the garden and pressure hoses are kink free.

Next, you're ready to start connecting everything, starting with the high-pressure hose.

1. Connect the high-pressure hose to the wand, or whatever attachment you're going to be using.
2. Connect the other end of the high-pressure hose to the machine.

Next, you're going to need water to use the pressure washer, so connect your garden hose to the input valve. Both gas and electric pressure washers should have a standard connection for a garden hose.

1. Screw the hose onto the connection point.
2. Make sure all the connections are secure and tight.
3. Turn on the water.
4. Once the water is on, make sure there's no water leaking from where the hose connects to the pressure washer.

If you're using an electric pressure washer, the next step is to plug it into the outlet.

Step 2

Add Detergent to the Pressure Washer

Though they're not always needed, detergents can increase cleaning effectiveness while reducing cleaning time. When renting or buying a pressure washer, inquire what accessories and detergents are available for it. To prevent damage to the internal parts, never run bleach in the machine or use detergents not designated for use in pressure washers.

Detergents can only be run through pressure washers using a wide spray pattern. In addition, electric power washers require a low-pressure setting on the spray wand. Follow your machine's instructions for using detergents, diluting the detergent and (if necessary) hooking up a chemical injector.

When using detergents, keep surfaces wet to avoid possible discoloration or damage. Finish by resetting the nozzle to a medium pattern (or changing the nozzle) and rinsing with plain water.

Switch detergents by draining the first detergent from the pressure washer, rinsing the system with plain water and introducing the next detergent.

Step 3

Select the Nozzle for the Pressure Washer

Most pressure washers come with a selection of different nozzles that allow you to customize the angle of the spray for different jobs. The nozzles should be color coded, following a standard range of options across brands.

A 0-degree spray nozzle concentrates the water into a small, powerful stream. The larger the angle, the wider the spray from the pressure washer, which comes with decreased power.

The nozzle you choose will depend on what you're using the pressure washer for. Wider patterns are good for spraying soap or detergent. Medium angles are used for general cleaning, and the narrow angles are for blasting deep stains.

- Red: 0-degree spray
- Yellow: 15-degree spray
- Green: 25-degree spray
- White: 40-degree spray
- Black: 65-degree spray

Some pressure washers, usually the smaller ones, come with a single adjustable spray nozzle that delivers zero to 60-degree fan patterns. Some brands offer accessory "rotating" or "turbo" nozzles that clean more effectively than standard adjustable nozzles because they spin the water stream.

Insert individual nozzle tips into the spray wand by retracting the quick-coupling collar, pushing the tip in as far as it will go and releasing the collar. Pull on the tip to confirm that it's firmly locked in position. Point the spray wand away from people and property when starting the power washer.

[VIA MENARDS.COM](https://www.menards.com)

Step 4

How to Start a Pressure Washer

Electric pressure washers usually start with a simple push button feature. Once everything is hooked up properly, just flip the switch, and you'll be ready to go.

To start a gas-powered washer:

1. Clean any debris from the inlet filter.
2. Connect any accessories.
3. Run water through the washer for one minute to prime the system and remove any air.
4. Squeeze the spray wand trigger to bleed water pressure.
5. Pull the starter cord to start the engine.

For the best cleaning results without damaging any surfaces, first, test the pressure setting and spray pattern on an inconspicuous place. Get to know the unusual uses of pressure washers.

Step 5

Power Washing Tips and Techniques

Cleaning Siding

If you're washing the siding on your house, start with the nozzle four feet from the house and move it closer, slowly, until you achieve the desired cleaning effect. Grip the wand with two hands, and direct the water stream at a 45-degree angle, moving the stream constantly. Don't hold the spray wand head on to the siding. This drives dirt into the surface rather than washing it away.

Lay tarps around the house perimeter to protect plants and collect paint chips blown off during washing. Houses built before 1977 may have lead paint chips that will have to be collected and properly disposed of at a hazardous waste facility.

Work small areas at a time. To prevent streaks, start washing from the bottom and work up. For even cleaning, use long, overlapping strokes. Rinse the siding by working from the top down.

Avoid driving water up behind the siding by keeping the spray stream level. Use an extension spray wand for reaching higher places. *Be careful when using a lance extension. The "kickback" can throw it into contact with power lines.* Don't spray windows. The high pressure can break them.

Also, here's how to pressure wash your whole house so that the new coat of exterior paint will stick better and last longer.

Washing Cars

Clean cars and other items with an accessory brush and detergent. First rinse the area with water, then switch to a detergent wash and finish with a rinse.

Cleaning a Driveway or Concrete Surfaces

Scour oil and dirt off a garage floor with a detergent:

1. Rinse surface dirt off the floor at high pressure.
2. Change the nozzle setting to low pressure to dispense detergent.
3. Finish by changing the nozzle back to high pressure and rinsing with water.

Washing a Deck

Renew deck boards by holding the spray wand at a 45-degree angle 1 to 2 ft. from the decking. Keep the water stream constantly moving. Use a higher-pressure (2,000 psi or greater) gas-powered washer and a concentrated spray nozzle setting (15-degree).

Step 6

Pressure Washer Safety

Pressure washers deliver extreme pressure and can cause serious injuries if misused. For safety, follow these guidelines:

- Don't point the pressure washer at people or pets or put your hand in front of the nozzle. The pressurized water stream could actually penetrate your skin or cause serious cuts.
 - Wear safety glasses when operating the washer.
 - Don't use pressure washers while working from ladders. Once you squeeze the trigger, the powerful recoil on the spray wand can throw you off balance and off the ladder. Before you move ahead, get to know about different types of pressure washer oil.
 - Maintain a minimum 6-ft. distance when spraying water around power lines, electrical masts or outlets.
 - Before uncoupling hoses, stop the machine, turn the water faucet off and squeeze the spray wand trigger to release all water pressure in the system.
 - Engage the safety lock on the trigger when you're not actually washing and when changing nozzle tips.
 - Wear eye protection and other personal safety gear.
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Step 7

How to Winterize a Pressure Washer

Winterize a pressure washer by filling the pump and internal system with undiluted RV-type antifreeze. Insert a funnel into a 3-ft. section of garden hose (one with a male faucet coupling), attach the coupling to the water intake on the washer and slide a 1-ft. section of hose over the water outlet. Start the gas engine and pour antifreeze into the funnel until a steady stream of antifreeze flows from the discharge hose. Stop the engine, pull off the hoses, and seal the intake and outlet with duct tape.

If possible, store the power washer indoors in the off-season to avoid damage to the pump, hoses and spray wand. When a gas-powered washer won't be used for a month or more, prevent damage to the engine by draining the system of gas or adding a gas preservative to the fuel tank.

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