

## Plastics Identification



**WARNING:** Always refer to Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) when handling chemicals and wear protective equipment as directed. Examples may include but are not limited to respirators and chemically resistant gloves. Failure to follow these instructions may result in serious personal injury.



**WARNING:** Always wear protective equipment including eye protection with side shields, and a dust mask when sanding or grinding. Failure to follow these instructions may result in serious personal injury.

**NOTE:** Identification of the various plastic types is necessary to select the appropriate repair methods to make high quality plastic repairs. Plastics can generally be broken down into 2 categories, thermoplastics and thermosetting plastics. Thermoplastics can be remolded by heating. This makes plastic welding a possible repair alternative.

1. **NOTE:** In some instances, a code or material designation is stamped indicating the plastic type.

Thermoplastics are solvent reactive. Types of thermoplastics include Thermoplastic Olefin (TPO), Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) and Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene (ABS). Polyolefins have an oily or waxy appearance. Examples include some bumper covers, stone shields, fender aprons and fan shrouds. Polyolefins require an adhesion promoter prior to carrying out any refinish procedure.

- To determine if the part is a polyolefin, grind the damaged area in an out-of-sight area. Grinding a polyolefin will melt and smear the plastic and leave a ragged edge. If the part is non-polyolefin, the area will grind or sand smoothly, producing a powdery dust.

### Rigid Plastic Parts

Code	Family Name	Common Trade Name	Typical Application
ABS	Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene	ABS, Cycolac, Lustran, Kralistic	A-Pillars, Consoles, Grilles
SMC	Sheet Molded Composite	SMC	Body Panels

### Flexible Plastic Parts

Code	Family Name	Common Trade Name	Typical Application
RRIM	Reinforced Reaction Injection-Mold Material PUR	RRIM	Fascias, Body Panels, Body Trims
TPO	Thermoplastic Polyolefin	Polytrope, Renflex, Santopren Telcar, Vistaflex, ETA, Apex, TPO	Bumpers, End Caps, Rubber Strips, Sight Shields, Claddings, Interior B-Post

2. Polyolefin plastic can also be identified by placing a small sliver in a container of water, if the sample floats, it is a polyolefin plastic. A non-polyolefin will sink when placed in a container of water.
3. Generally, thermosetting plastics are rigid or semi-rigid. Sheet-Molded Composite (SMC) is reinforced with glass and other fibers and are strong and rigid. **SMC** is used for large panels such as hoods, liftgates, fenders and quarter panels.
  - A burn test can be a reliable method to determine if a plastic is a thermosetting plastic. Extreme care must be exercised when using this method.
    - Apply an open flame to the corner of the damaged component. If the material crystallizes and becomes hard, it is a thermosetting plastic.

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