

A Professional's Guide to Using Your New FenderSplendor FS 488 and FS 688 and FS 688X Paint Meter©

How to use a FenderSplendor Paint Meter to maximize profits and reduce appraisal losses.

- A car dealer shows you the *secrets* to finding *hidden damage* with a FenderSplendor Paint Meter...even in the rain.
- Learn what a "low" reading means and why it could cost you a ton of money.
- Use a FenderSplendor to buy or trade cars for less...improve your profit.
- Learn why the *way you hold* a paint meter is critical.



This Advanced Users Guide Will Make You A Small Fortune...If... ***You Take The Time To Read It.***

We are Car Dealers who used a paint meter every day for years. The secrets we learned will help you avoid costly mistakes and will make your new FS 488, FS 688 or FS 688X more valuable to you.

Today, with a FenderSplendor Paint Meter you can almost totally eliminate buying and appraising mistakes. **Learning to use your new FenderSplendor properly will improve the results you get with it.**

Getting Started:

Read the instructions and this guide! I didn't, and I wandered around for two days wondering what in the heck I was seeing on the paint meter. I couldn't make sense of the readings. (OK True Confession time. I'm was a Car Dealer and I never read instructions or ask for directions. Sound familiar?) After I learned to use the gauge I realized I never wanted to be without it again.

Your new FS 488 or FS 688 needs no calibration. It was tested and fresh batteries were installed just prior to shipping it to you. **Be sure that you store the gauge in such a way that the probe doesn't get depressed, as this will wear the batteries out.** I once left mine in my briefcase, and the probe was pushed in, so when I went to use it, it was 'dead.'

The FS 688X was designed to read to more exact standards and also reads thicker readings. It may occasionally need calibration and comes with shims, and foils, along with simple instructions.

We suggest sliding the gauge into the holster "head first" so that the LCD readout is pressed to one end of the holster. This will leave enough room for the probe not to get depressed. I also suggest leaving the hand strap to the top, so that it does not get caught on the bottom of the holster when you pull the Paint Meter out to use it.

Switching between Steel (Fe) and Aluminum (NFE) is automatic. The FS 488, FS 688 and FS 688X switch between Steel and Aluminum totally automatically. A small indicator on the face will tell you if you are measuring FE or NFE.

The FenderSplendor FS 488 and FS 688 turns on automatically when you press it to any surface. It stays on for about 10-15 seconds so that you can see the last reading. I have a simple habit of pressing the probe in when I pull it out to use it the first time, so it is warmed up.

The FS 688 display will flip over automatically to read "right-side up" when the FS 688 is tilted past 90 degrees. When taking a measurement on the side of a vehicle, tilt the probe end downward as you complete the reading. This will cause the gauge display to flip.

The way you hold the FS 488 or FS 688 is important

Hold the FenderSplendor flush to the surface you are measuring. The most common cause of an inaccurate reading is not having the meter perpendicular and flush to the surface. If you rock the FS 488 or FS 688 (or any paint meter) to one side or the other, the reading will be inaccurate.



As I attend auctions I can't believe the number of dealers I see using a gauge incorrectly. If you are looking at a vehicle and you see a reading that appears to be high, I suggest lifting the gauge a few inches and then pressing it on the surface again; making sure that it is flush.

As you go from panel to panel, be sure to lift the FS 488, FS 688, or FS 688X 3-4 inches from the panel you just measured. The Gauge will take a new measurement in less than a second, but it is important to lift it a few inches from the surface before you take the next measurement.

Believe the meter! Go out and use the meter on a few vehicles. Get used to what the typical readings are...they will vary by make, model and even color. You are **looking for differences, not the actual thickness**. If a vehicle is 5.00 to 6.0 mils as you check it, and then a panel jumps to 7.5 mils, you have paintwork.

Some cars come from the factory with paint in the 3.5 mil range, and some come as high as 7-9 mils or more.

American vehicles built in the older factories seem to be thicker and show more variation. The most common reading you will see when you go up to a vehicle will be in the 5-6 mil range. Remember, **you are looking for large changes**. Almost all vehicles use a three coat painting process and when a panel is refinished the painter will clear-coat the entire panel. This will cause a 1 ½ to 2 mil jump on your FS 488.

A Special Note About The FS 688X. The FS 688X reads in .10th of Mil instead of 1/2 Mil. *This isn't necessary to spot paintwork on a vehicle*, but it is a help in showing where previous cleaning/polishing/wet sanding may have left the clear coat very thin. Perfectionists and professionals like this feature. However, it can confuse you at first since the numbers seem to jump around more. You will see readings of 4.9, 5.7, 6.2, 5.5 and 5.0. This is a very normal pattern. Do not let the 10th

Mil reading fool you. Also the 688X reads to 50 Mills thickness, which is helpful if you deal in restored cars, where there is a possibility of lots of "bondo."

Go to a body shop and find a car they just finished. This helped me more than anything. I was able to see the exact changes that take place as you 'meter' a vehicle. The body shop manager told me where the paint was, and then we checked it. I could see the exact differences in the readings. **Next**, he asked me to do a truck he had just finished and asked me to tell him where the work was. You should have seen the look on his face as I not only found paint work, but as the gauge started really going up where he had used bondo (filler on the rear of the cab). More on this subject in the advanced section of this guide.

Keep the gauge with you. You can't use it if you don't have it with you. I recently sold every gauge in stock and then sold my own personal gauge. The next day, a Saturday, I stopped by the local Mercedes Dealership to see if I could buy anything. It was raining when I got there, and the used car manager was appraising a gold Maxima. I walked around the car with him, and it was flawless. Neither of us saw any signs of paintwork. I bought the vehicle—paying top dollar, and even after it was detailed, didn't see any paintwork. When my next shipment of FenderSplendor arrived I happened to check the car. **Oops!!!** The right front door had been refinished (exceptionally well) and the front fender had been replaced. It happens that the work was perfect, and I didn't lose any money. In most cases I would have lost at least \$1,000 on the car. More importantly, **if I had had the gauge with me I could have probably bought the car for considerably less!**

Lookout for "low" readings

What will the FenderSplendor gauge miss? There are two situations where you can get 'tricked' with any paint gauge.

First, if a panel has been replaced (like the front fender on the Maxima above) the reading might be lower. The first few times you see this it can fool you. The Maxima was fairly typical and the whole car gauged at 4-4.5 mils until I got to the right front door, where it measured over 6 mils. They had simply sanded and repaired, and then painted over the existing material, hence the higher reading.

However, when I got to the front fender it only read 3.5-4.0 mils. Something didn't 'smell' right. Here's the story. When a whole panel is replaced it is refinished from the bare metal up, and can commonly be a little less thick than the factory. Obviously, this depends on the painter, but be on the lookout.

Recently, our office manager got broadsided in the right rear in a Ford 500. When she brought the car back to work I took a look at it. At that time I did not know exactly what had been repaired or replaced. I started measuring on the driver's side (force of habit) and as I got to the deck lid (trunk) it jumped 2 mils. Common sense will always tell you to look further when you see a jump. You know paintwork has been done; now you need to **find out why**—and how bad it was.

When I came around to the right rear quarter, the readings dropped. Bingo. The quarter panel had been replaced and the painter put less paint back on the replaced panel.

Second...As paint meters become more common, especially among high-line buyers, custom body shops are refinishing panels that don't 'meter' properly. I recently sold a meter to one of the finest body shops in Florida for that exact purpose. At first I couldn't figure why he needed the

FenderSplendor, and he was reluctant to tell me. Then he confessed...he needed to see exactly what panels he would have to refinish to make sure they all read properly. Obviously you can't go to the expense of doing this type of work unless you have a very expensive car, with a high profit potential...so this should not matter in your day-to-day dealings. Also, only a few really sophisticated high-line wholesalers know this 'trick.'

Factory paintwork. The method used to paint vehicles has gotten better and better, and much more consistent. Yes, I have 'metered' cars that came right off the truck and showed inconsistencies. The fact remains that the paintwork is not always uniform. Vehicles will vary, depending on the actual color (pearl colors tend to be thicker) and on the factory that produced the vehicle (older factories tend to have thicker paint).

Don't pass a good buy just because of paintwork. Common sense needs to prevail in your appraising and buying. A painted rear quarter on a five-year-old Chevy Blazer probably won't matter if the work was good and the vehicle wasn't severely damaged. Missing a painted fender on a one-year-old Porsche is going to cost you some serious money, even if the car is not 'hurt.'

Advanced Secrets for your FenderSplendor FS 488, FS 688 and FS688X.

We used a FenderSplendor every day in our wholesale business and from time to time I come up with a way to use the FenderSplendor more effectively. **Here is a use that will make you money.**

Often times when you uncover paintwork on a vehicle you are evaluating you want to know, "**How serious was the damage?**" There are two 'secrets' you can use to get a better idea of the damage.

First, when I find a panel that reads high, I begin to take more readings at about 4-6 inch intervals. As you get where the damage is there will almost always be filler (bondo), which will show up as higher and higher readings. I had a Suburban that read consistent 5-6.5 mils until I got to the left rear quarter, which jumped to over 8 mils. As I began moving the FenderSplendor (be sure to lift the gauge several inches off the panel each time you move it) towards the rear the numbers got slightly higher. When I got to the taillight area, the readings really jumped (over 20 mils); a sure sign that the area had a lot of filler.

Now for the real 'secret.'

Most inexperienced buyers just measure the surface (external) surfaces. I have found that measuring the doorjambs and trunk sills on a vehicle that has had paint will really help me determine the extent of the damage. Doorjambs will almost always read about half the paint thickness of the regular panels. A common reading in a factory jamb will be in the 2-mil range.

If the vehicle has been hit hard enough to have paint work in the doorjambs, it is a pretty good sign of a hard hit. The Suburban I mentioned had paint work inside the tailgate, which showed immediately when I put the FenderSplendor on it. I knew that the vehicle had had a serious rear end collision and I avoided a big loss.

I recently had a similar experience with a Lexus ES300 I really wanted (It was too good a deal—another sign to look for...but that's another story.) The seller, a new car dealership, told me it had

some paint on the left rear quarter, and that wet sanding would fix it. It was raining the day I looked at the Lexus, so it was hard to see everything. When I put the FenderSplendor on the car, I found that the left front fender had been painted also. In the rain, I couldn't see that the fender had been replaced (it had) but I could spot the paintwork with the FenderSplendor. I wasn't sure of the extent of the damage, so I put the FenderSplendor in the doorjamb.

Bingo...the car had been hit hard enough to be painted in the jambs. I avoided a potential hand grenade (loss). **Actually** (true story), I bought the car (the seller came down over \$500 when I confronted him with the paint gauge readings) and re-wholesaled it to a wholesaler from New Jersey who doesn't use a paint gauge! A FenderSplendor will make you money in many different ways, once you start using it. I have sold that buyer two meters since that time.

Using the FenderSplendor FS 488 or FS 688 makes it easier to negotiate with the person you are buying a vehicle from, or trading it in from. The gauge keeps you from being the 'enemy' and it's hard to get mad at a gauge.

I had a very good dealer source that I bought many cars from. The manager 'called' most of the cars accurately but occasionally would overlook something. I always had to decide if it was best to just 'overlook' his mistake or to confront him. I had just gotten in the paint meter business when he sold me a 3 year old Porsche Boxster, which he described as having a painted hood, but no damage. It was pouring rain when I went to get the Porsche. He had told the truth, the hood was repainted for cosmetic reasons only—there was no front end damage.

However, he totally missed that the car had been hit in the right rear quarter. Instead of confronting him, I simply asked him to come out and take a look at something. I showed him the readings and when we got to the damage he was surprised (or acted surprised). Seeing the reading on the meter kept me from a confrontation and he dropped the price for me, making the car an even better buy. (It was not serious damage.)

We also list (used to) a lot of cars on eBay. We used the fact that we had gone over the car with a FS 488 as additional proof that the vehicle was in good shape. I actually disclosed small paintwork, saying "I went over the Infiniti with a FenderSplendor FS 488 Paint Meter and found a small area on the bottom of the right rear door that had been professionally refinished—probably a parking lot scratch." I found that this type of disclosure gave me additional credibility.

With America becoming more and more lawsuit happy, it just makes good sense to know what you are buying and selling. If there is any disadvantage to using a FenderSplendor Paint Meter it's that it can make you a little lazy. You still need to take the time to take a close look at each car you are considering. The paint gauge can tell you the thickness of the paint; you need to be the judge of why it is too thick or too thin. FenderSplendor, Inc. assumes no responsibility for decisions you make using our gauges.

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