

BODY, PAINT,

GLASS, TOP,

INTERIOR,

WEATHERSTRIPPING,

ETC.

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DASHBOARD WEEKEND

Skill Level C

There are three things that I can think of that you might want to do that require dash removal. They are 1) refinishing and replacing wood veneer, 2) revision of gauge layout, and 3) modification of wiper switch mounting hole. Why not do them all at once in a weekend.

Refinishing: The hardest part of this job is removing the instruments. It is easier if you have very thin 14" long fingers. However, if you don't, using the speedometer and tach holes for access helps. Reconnecting everything and/or making diagrams helps. Disconnect the battery. Start by removing the 2 screws holding the glove box door to its retaining bar. Next, remove the speedo by first removing the cable and then the little knurled nuts and retaining clamps. Make sure you note the black ground wires under the nuts. It will then pull out about 2" or 3" so you can see the other connections. Don't forget the trip meter reset knob under the dash. Using the same approach, remove the tach. Now remove the screws holding the wood dash to the panel. The whole dash will now slide out about 4" to 6". I prefer to remove one switch, gauge, or light at a time and reconnect them behind the wood panel but you can just as well make diagrams. The rheostat for the dash lights stays on the wood panel.

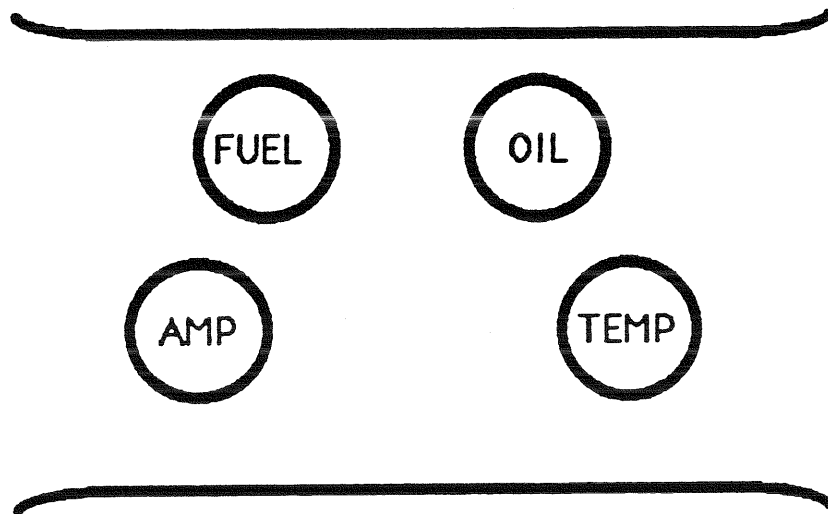
Let me hastily qualify that week-end. If your dash is badly cracked (cracks 1/2" to 1" apart over most of the dash) you can remove the old plastic coating within an hour to 2 hours at most. Use a sharp 3/4" wide wood chisel turned with the back (flat) side up to gently push under the edges of the cracked pieces and pop them up. The popping is done by pushing gently forward while prying upward on the chip (downward motion at back end of chisel handle). Otherwise you must sand or grind the plastic off and this is quite a job.

Now to the refinishing. If you want to have the original wood showing you'll have to be very careful removing the plastic overlay then sand it smooth. Be careful because the veneer is very thin. If you prefer a different wood, look under millwork or lumber in the yellow pages for suppliers of hardwood veneers. Depending on how exotic you get, it should cost \$5.00 to \$25.00. To apply the veneer sand the panel, wipe dust free, and apply liberal quantities of contact cement to it and the veneer per the instructions on the can. Pressing firmly with a hot iron helps.

There are many finishes you might use but it should be suitable for exterior conditions. Here is a suggestion for a durable and very quick finish. Refinishing with Fabulon is a quick method which results in a finish equal to urethane. It is available at most hardware stores. It is alcohol based, dries very quick and very hard. It is used for bowling lanes so it has to be tough. In addition to quick recoat time, it is not sensitive to curing time such as urethane. Most urethanes must set at least 24-48 hours between coats. If you recoat too soon, it all crinkles up. Most varnishes and urethanes give an amber tint to wood. Fabulon changes the color very little. Test finish a small area where the dash light rheostat knob will hide it to see what you'll get. You may want to stain the wood first.

Revision of Gauge Layout: By now I'm sure you have realized that the Brits make something the way they want it and don't worry about the rest of the world. Just because the rest of the world bought 90% of their cars didn't matter. A good example is the dashboards of their cars. They are made for right hand drive. With cars like the MG and TR the Brits conceded moving the two main instruments but the ones for the vital signs of engine life like oil pressure and temperature remain where they would be for right hand drive. This means they are hidden behind the steering wheel and your right hand while the two less important gauges are readily seen. Swapping the gauges is very simple. The wiring for the three electrical gauges is long enough to reach the other holes. The oil pressure line is just

long enough to reach the top right hole if you check the routing behind the dash and perhaps remove the rubber tie that usually holds it to the speedo cable and such under the hood. This tie is sort of a rubber version of a garbage bag tie. Insure that the line is supported and not able to be snagged by the steering column, etc.



Wiper Switch Mounting: As most of you know, the original Clear Hooter wiper switches are no longer made. The good news is that Clear Hooter is out of business - If anybody deserved it they did. Not even Lucas could consistently produce products of such consistently inferior quality. The bad news is that there is no close replacement for the Clear Hooter junk. Roadster factory now carries a Lucas switch that looks similar. It is described on page 53 of their summer '87 catalog. Since you have the dash off, using it is not too much of a job. However, their description of the dash mods fails to mention the wood dash must be at least partially removed and that the actual dash must also be filed out. Don't forget to do the latter while you have the wood dash out of the way.

ROCKER PANEL REPLACEMENT FOR THE EVERYDAY CAR

Skill Level B/C

I believe the correct name is outer sills. Regardless of the name, by now a lot of them are pretty rotten. I specified everyday car because this is going to be done in such a way that you can do it with fairly basic tools. If you're into showing and absolute authenticity, you'll have to go to a shop and pay about \$200 per side. If you don't mind using pop-rivets to attach them, and having a few of the rivets showing at the door post bottoms when you open the door this article is for you. The time required should be about one evening and one day. Start Friday evening and you'll have a day to spare for a little extra rust repair and rust proofing of the fenders.

Start by removing the front fender. The bumper does not have to be removed, but it makes the job a lot easier. There are 3 bolts under the headlight, 3 in the door post, 3 under the bottom of the rear into the rocker panel, and the ones you see on the top edge, plus one at the very top rear corner into the door post. Also remove the headlight because there is a brace behind it. Remove the bolts from the front of the rear fender. There are 3 in the back of the door post and 1 in the rocker. You will find it swings out about 6" with no problem. However, you must be extremely careful that you don't hit the door edge with the fender or vice-versa during this exercise. A few well placed rags taped on with masking tape is cheap insurance. Use stiff brushes and a strong cleaner like Simple Green or 409 to get everything as clean as you can, including the fender. That should pretty well take care of Friday evening and give things a chance to get dry.

Appraise the situation rust-wise and determine what else, if anything, beneficial you could do while the fenders are loose. Remember, paint and undercoat don't stick to rust, they accelerate it by trapping water. Grind away rust with a 1/4"

drill and an 80 grit or courser disc. Rust "converters" such as Extend are one of the better things available to the average guy who doesn't have \$20,000 worth of tools or the bucks to have his car professionally done.

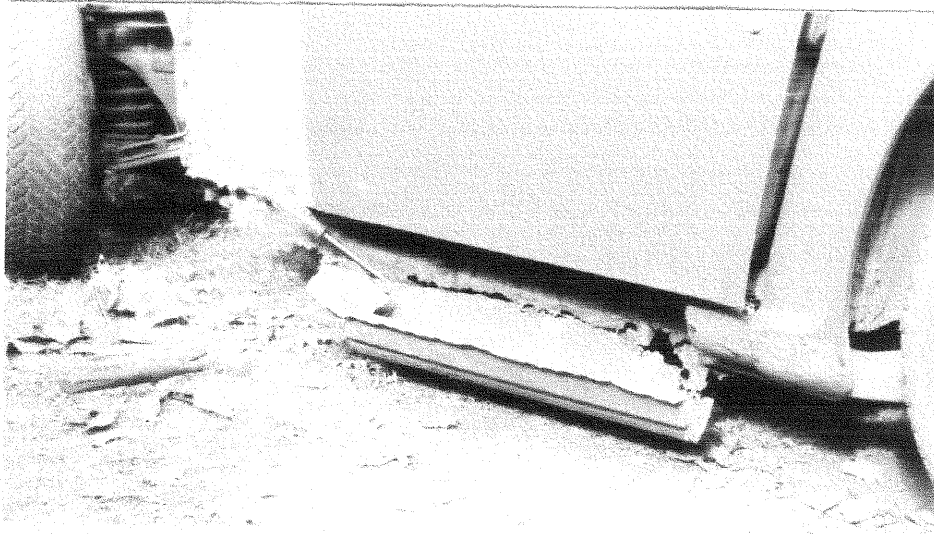
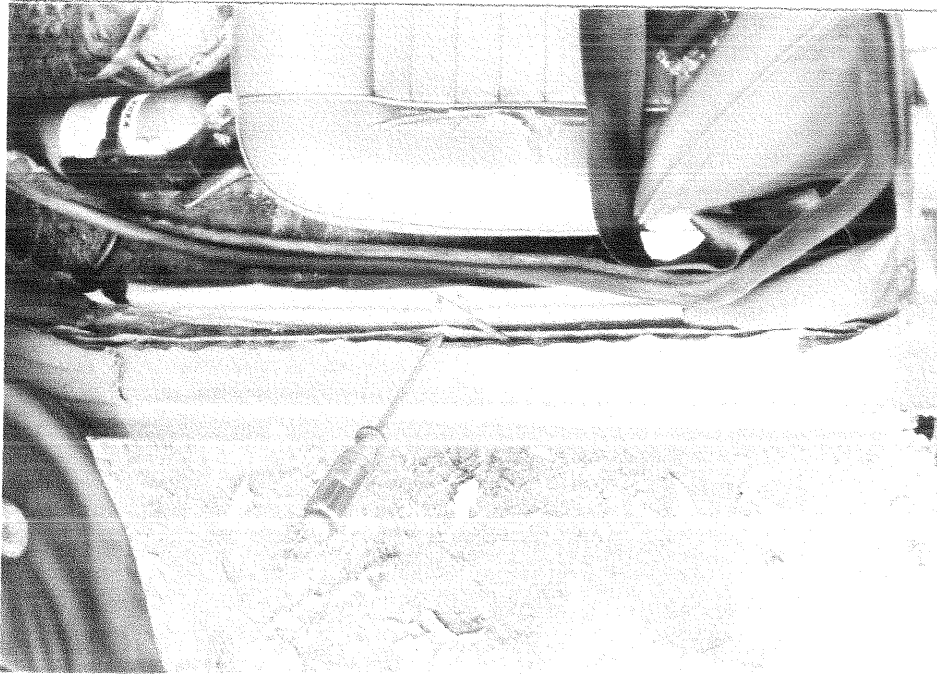
Begin by cutting the spot welds along the top of the - let me switch terms here because sill takes less time to write than rocker panel- sill. Use a large screwdriver to pry the panels apart as shown in photo 1, prying more on the sill than the inner sill. The wider you open the gap the better. Then use a small, sharp chisel as shown to cut the spot welds. Generally, the welds cut better if you go at them from both front and rear. Also cut nearly vertical or to the outside, trying to cut the outer sill metal rather than the inner sill. There are welds in the bottoms of the door posts too.

Incidentally, before I forget it, there are no drain holes below the door posts in replacement sills. You should drill at least a 3/8" hole there as the original had.

Photo 2 shows most of the rocker cut away. I used an air driven high speed grinder to do this but you can use chisels and tin snips. It might not be as neat of a cut but who cares, you're going to throw it away anyhow. Notice that in front of the door and behind the front fender the sill is sandwiched between the inner sill and the cowl. Cut this very close and bend it down flat. Next attack the lower welds. Once the sill is removed, you can again appraise the situation and determine what you'll do about the back side of the sill (actually part of the floor stamping). If the sill is bad, it's for sure this piece is just as bad or worse. The practical answer is to clean and straighten the remains as best you can and pop-rivet a 4" strip of sheet metal to it and the inner sill from front to back (sorry, I forgot to photograph this). Make sure the lower edge is level with the original bottom edge. Also make sure none of your rivets are where the bottom edge of the outer sill must be attached. When riveting the upper edge of this patch on the left side of the car be sure you don't drill into the wiring harness just inside on the floor.

Now you're ready for the big moment- the installation. The index is the door (which, incidentally, can move as can the door posts). The new sill will probably go in place in the rear easily but not go up under the door post. A little gentle lift with a floor jack (or any jack) will help but don't force it. Make sure it is not binding on the top as you apply upward pressure. Push the rear fender inward (you'll find it goes into place easily) and tap the sill back or forward to roughly line up the end of the exposed portion to the rear fender. The front edge of the exposed portion should also line up with the front of the door. Carefully close the door fully. Look at the gap under the door. If it looks reasonable, you're in business. If not check to see if you have a spot weld or other obstruction on the bottom of the door posts which is holding it down. Once the sill looks good start pop riveting the bottom edge to the lower inner sill and/or your patch. Next comes the top edge in the door opening area. The sill should be very nearly level with the inner sill. In both the above, the rivets should be 1/8" diameter, 1/8" reach, or preferably 1/4" reach, steel with steel mandrels (aluminum rivets don't compress enough before breaking) about 4" apart. An "L" shaped patch about 1 1/2" wide by 4" long (bend bottom leg out at 90 degrees about 1' long) on the front of the door post is advisable. See photo 3. The leg on the sill should be riveted as close to the bend as possible. A side brace is also desirable. However, the horizontal leg must be very short so it does not interfere with the sloped portion of the fender where it fits closely over the sill. The rear post is treated similarly.

You're now ready to bolt the fenders back on. Before you do, however, consider trying to prevent the cause of much of the rust you encountered by routing the damn vent drain hoses out of the area behind the front fender. Extending the hose through the splash shield makes all the difference in the world.



B7

CARE AND FEEDING OF THE DOOR HINGES

SKILL LEVEL D

You say any dummy knows how to take care of a hinge, right? So then tell me when was the last time you did it? The hinges are a rather mundane piece and easily ignored. Add to this the fact that the amount of leverage that is applied to the hinge (the length of the door as opposed to the length of the hinge) and you can understand why you never really noticed them getting tight. However, when they do get rusty and tight that leverage works to flex the sheet metal in the door and doorpost. Metal fatigue and breakage of these thin surfaces can follow or even a frozen hinge that breaks a pin. The pin can also grind away at the moving side of the hinge (rust is a very good grinding compound) causing the hinge to let the door "droop" and not close correctly.

Odds are your hinges are a bit stiff. Unless they swing effortlessly, they are. First spray a little WD-40 or such on the top and bottom surfaces of the flat part of the hinge where the pin passes through and an even smaller amount at the joint between the hinge halves. The reason I say a little is because we are not trying to use the WD-40 as the main lubricant of the hinge. It is merely a means to carry heavier oil that will stay in place longer into the tight joints at the top and bottom and the two halves of the hinge. A day or two later put a small amount of 20W-50 or 30 weight oil in the same locations. All this is based on your using the car more or less daily, incidentally, and thereby working the hinges. Next liberally coat the top of the pins, the joints of the pins, and the metal surfaces surrounding them with oil. After a few days use you'll notice the hinge loosening up. Keep the whole area moist with oil from then on and you'll never have a hinge problem. To be most effective the hinge must be rather grubby looking with oil and crud (sorry about that you concurs types).

If your door stop cracks loudly when you close the door you better act fast or it isn't long for this world. A few frequent drops of WD-40 will help it a lot more than a glob of grease every 6 months. A few well placed drops of oil about the latch will help too- but that is another issue to be covered at another time.