

Basic Guidelines for Convertible Top Installation for Domestic Cars.

These instructions are basic to American convertibles and are designed to be a guide only. They should allow you to generally find your way around an installation, but are not specific to any one make/model. Your car will, no doubt differ a little or a lot from these instructions. They are not meant to substitute for the knowledge and experience of a professional installer. We recommend that you use a professional installer. For the do it yourselfer, the very best detailed instructions are found in an OEM shop manual.

1. Before removing your old top, check the frame. Run it up and down several times, checking for binding or areas that pinch the fabric. Make sure both sides go up and down evenly. Repair any problems. Drape your new top over your old top to compare the fit. It will appear slightly small because your old top is under it.
2. Raise the top halfway and remove the bow header strip. This is the bead that runs across the front of the top. It is stapled in, and should pull off easily. There may be a metal strap screwed over the edge of the material. Remove the screws and the strap and set aside. Remove front weather strip. Remove all the staples across the header bow. Take care to not damage the fiber or plastic tacking strip. This should free the front of the top.
3. Remove the forward most side rail weather strips on both sides, along with the quarter side rail weather strips. These both bolt on from the backside of the roof rail. There may be a Phillips screw in the ends on the weather strip side. You will have to look for these, as they are often embedded in the weather strip. Pull the fabric strips off of the quarters. They are glued to the metal.
4. Side tension cables are installed in a sleeve in the top. The front end connects to the right and left end of the header bow and the rear end exits the top behind the door window and connects to the frame. Look for the ends of the side cables and determine which end will be removed the easiest, and remove the end of the cables at one end, leaving the other end attached the car. Pull the cables out through the pockets in the edge of the top, and drape inside. Inspect the cables. If they are frayed or corroded, now is the time to replace them, as you must partially remove the top to replace them later.
5. Check the second and third bows to see if there are any screws attaching the top. If there are, remove the screws and slide the metal bars out of the listings (pockets) and set aside.
6. Put the top in the up position and latch the front. Remove the wire-on from the top of the rear bow. It is stapled on. Remove the rest of the staples across the rear bow. Some of these may be difficult to see, so some probing may be necessary to locate them all.

Rusted or broken staples are sharp. Be sure to remove staples completely. Tiny pieces that cannot be removed should be hammered flat.

7. Behind the rear seat there usually hangs a piece of vinyl that separates the interior of the car from the trunk. It is called the well liner. Loosen or remove the well liner to provide access to attachment points beneath. You should be able to see a metal strip about one and a half inches high with a series of bolts through it. This is the rear tack rail. Using the correct size socket, remove the bolts. There should be 11 to 15 of them, and they should go the entire length of the tack rail, all the way around to the side of the car where the top pistons are. When all of the bolts are removed, the back of the top should be loose. Some GM cars use a "floating bar" that just has a couple of bolts in the ends. For these you will need a flat ratchet, as they are facing the outside of the car.
8. After the rear tack rail is loose, go to the outside of the car and place a heavy blanket or fender covers over the rear of the car around the convertible top opening. Drape the blanket into the opening and lift the rear tack rail out of the hole and place it on the blanket. Remove just the staples that go through the convertible top on both sides. This should be the last thing holding the convertible top onto the car. Remove the top and set aside for later use checking and marking the pattern.
9. Most domestic convertibles have two bow pads. They are installed above the top bows and run from front to rear. One is installed over the drivers' seat and one over the passengers seat. Their job is to prevent the metal folding frame from abrading a hole in the top. They also keep the bows aligned. We recommend replacing your bow pads with every top. If you are not installing a new window or pads, skip down to # 12. If you are not installing pads skip to #11.
10. Replace bow pads one at a time. These staple on the ends and sometimes to the ends of the middle bows as well. On some cars there are screws holding them onto the center bows. Some cars require that you open the pads up to remove the pads. After one pad is off, lay a yardstick vertically down the center of the rear window to the edge of the finish molding surrounding the top opening. The yardstick should be leaning across the rear bow, and you should be able to read the measurement at the center of the rear bow. This is the rear bow height. This should correspond to the measurement designed for your car. It must be correct as the rest of the top depends on it for position. If you do not have this number, we will be happy to provide that measurement. Attach the pad in the same manner as it was attached originally, making sure that they are snug.
11. To remove the rear curtain, take out the staples along the rear tack strip and from across the rear bow and the rear window should lift right out. If your pads are on top of the rear curtain and you are not replacing the pads, just cut the rear curtain around the pads, and install the new rear curtain over them.
When installing the new rear window, first find the center of the rear bow, the

center of the tack strip and the center of the window assembly at the top and bottom and mark them. There is often a small notch in the rear bow and tack strip signifying the center.

Staple the center of the rear window top strip to the center of the rear bow, aligning the edge of the rear curtain top strip to the front edge of the rear bow. Staple the remainder of the rear curtain top strip to the rear bow, pulling to the outside of the car slightly to smooth out the wrinkles as you go along. Lay your convertible top over the window assembly to ascertain that the window is high enough for the top to cover the upper edge of the glass.

There should be $\frac{1}{2}$ " to $\frac{3}{4}$ " of overlap. Too much overlap means the window is too high; no overlap means the window is too low. Next, align the center of the lower part of the rear window with the corresponding center of the rear tack strip. Staple the center of the rear curtain to the center of the rear tack strip. Then work your way out to the edge of the rear curtain in the same manner as before.

Unlatch the front of the top frame and have someone hold it up about a foot to give you working slack. Bolt in the rear tack strip with every other bolt, being certain to have one at the end of each tack strip. Close and latch the top.

If there are any wrinkles, you can either pull them out along the top of the rear curtain assembly or along the rear tack strip. You can mark the locations with chalk or another removable medium. Make the adjustments on the rear bow first, then to the rear tack strip if necessary. When you are finished installing the rear curtain, measure the bow height again to ensure a proper fit.

12. Before installing the convertible top, lay it out on a table or clean floor, with the old top over it. Line up the edges along both sides and then mark on the new top where the bolt holes went through the old top. Some people prefer to mark where the top edge of the rear tack strip hit the old top on the new top. Either way will work. This is an important guide to where the top is supposed to fit on the rear tack strip, and will save you a lot of time. Because vinyl and fabric is a flexible medium, these marks are guides only. You may need to adjust your top to compensate.
13. Now that the back of your new top is marked, lay the new top over the frame in a position that is fairly correct. If you removed any metal strips from the listings in the old top, slide them into the appropriate listings now. For your convenience, we have installed a string in the side tension cable sleeve. Hook the end of the cable to the string and pull it through the sleeve. Do the same on the other side. Raise the top frame about halfway and connect the side cables to their appropriate places. Move the top frame to the up position and latch the front. The cables should be tight, and align the top from side to side. Now, you need to slide the top either forward or backward to place the quarter flaps in the correct place. Quarter flaps are sewn to the top at the side edge, behind the side windows. They hold the top to the folding mechanism. The seam that holds the quarter flaps to the top should line up with the edge of the convertible top frame.

14. Begin stapling the rear quarters of the top to the rear tack strip, beginning at the front end of the tack strip near the quarter flaps. With a few staples in place, pull the rear of the top, toward the rear window, around the bend in the tack strip, stretching it *slightly*, and staple the other end. Then pull down on the top at the curve until your alignment marks are in the right place, and staple the top to the tack strip. Continue stapling until there are sufficient staples to hold the top in place. Do the same for both sides. Then bolt in the rear tack strip with just a few bolts, like before.
15. At the front of the car, with the frame still locked, pull the side of the top forward until most of the wrinkles disappear. While holding the top forward, Mark the top at the front edge of the frame on both sides. Now raise the top halfway again. Pull the front of the top around the front bow so as to fold it around the bow. Pull the top ½" past the front edge of the bow, fold under and staple between the outer edge and the seam on both sides. Close the top and latch it. The sides and quarters should now be smooth and the rear bow should line up at the darts in the top above the rear window. If you have wrinkles, mark them with chalk and go back and make the adjustments using the instructions in step 14. Add the front header strip that you removed earlier by stapling under the flap.
16. Following directions on the container, apply spray contact cement to the quarter flaps and the front side flaps. With the top latched, pull the flaps into position and glue down. Raise the top halfway and install the weather strips.
17. With the top closed and latched, staple the wire-on across the rear bow with the flap of the wire-on toward the front of the car, taking care to apply it straight. Bend over the top and hammer flat. Install the end caps.
18. Now go inside the car and install the rest of the bolts. Replace the well, and you're done.
19. Leave the top up for at least two days to a week to allow it to stretch into position.