TRUNK AND DOOR SEALS REPLACEMENT

Whether you are doing a ground up restoration on your Tri-5 or just sprucing things up, one of the things you will probably need to replace are the door and trunk seals. It doesn’t sound complicated, and really it isn’t, but you would not believe how much confusion there is over the installation, especially if you have had the car apart for a while and don’t really remember how the old ones came off.

Which side of the seal goes where? What do I use to attach it to the body? The clips are too big and won’t push in the holes. We hear these questions and statements from customers all the time. Follow along and we will show you the easy way to replace these seals and give you some pointers that will make the job much easier.

YOU WILL NEED:
3M Weather-stripping Adhesive
(Available at any auto parts store)
3M Weather-stripping Adhesive Remover
(Available at any auto parts store)
3M Green or White Masking Tape
Small Ball Peen Hammer
Small Block of Wood
1/2” and 9/16” Socket
3/8” or 1/2” Ratchet
1/2” and 9/16” Box or Open-end Wrenches
Drill and 1/8” Drill Bit
Trunk Seal
Door Seals
Door Seal Retainers

To start, we recommend that you remove the deck lid and doors from the car to replace these seals. If you are doing a full-blown restoration you will want to install the seals before you mount the deck lid and doors on the car. We have replaced the seals with the deck lid and doors on the car, but believe us there are a number of spots where you need easy access if you are going to do this properly and you don’t get the access you need with the parts installed.

Note: See Tips and Tricks on page 4

Once the deck lid and doors have been taken off the car, the first thing you will do is remove the existing seals. When that is done, clean the surface where the seals go of any old adhesive. 3M makes a weather-stripping adhesive remover that works well for this as well as cleaning up any stray adhesive left after you have installed the new seals. Obviously, if you are doing the install after a new paint job the contact areas will already be clean.

DECKLID
On 55 and 56 models the deck lid seal is held to the lid with adhesive only. On the 57’s there are clips like you find on the door seals. If you have a 57 you want these clips to be snug in the holes, not loose. You may think that they should be able to be pushed in by hand, but in reality you will probably need to install them with a block of wood and a ball peen hammer as described in the door section to follow. You will glue it as you would the door seals as well. (Under no circumstances will you try and drill out the holes to make them bigger!!) For this article, we are replacing the deck lid seal on our 56 project car.
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Position the deck lid so you have easy access with the outside of the lid facing down.

Check the fit of the seal in the channel (the curved part of the underside of the deck lid) to be sure you have the correct seal before you start gluing.

Pre-fit the seal to make sure it is long enough and so you have an idea of how it will fit. Remember that the seal, when installed properly, will fold into itself when it contacts the body.

Tear off a number of pieces of masking tape and line them up on the deck lid for easy access, as shown.

Then, starting just to the left of the center of the lid at the lock assembly, run a line of adhesive in the middle of the seal channel. Carefully position the seal and press it into place.

Put a piece of tape every couple of inches on the deck lid across the seal to hold the seal in place until the adhesive dries.

When you get to the end of your bead of adhesive add another bead and continue applying the seal to the deck lid and tapping it in place.

Work slowly and don’t stretch the seal too much around the corners or you could have a buckle problem.

Another pair of hands to help keep the seal in place while you are applying the tape is not a bad idea and will help to keep the seal from coming loose and spreading glue all over the place like it did to us here.

If this happens to you, don’t worry. You can clean it all up after it has dried with adhesive remover.

Work your way around the deck lid until you are almost back where you started. At this point you will have to trim the seal and butt it up against the other end so the seal is complete. **DO not put adhesive all the way to the end until you have trimmed the seal and are satisfied with the fit.**

Also, remember it is easier to cut more if you are too long but impossible to put the seal back together if you are too short so make small cuts a couple of times to assure a perfect fit. The seal ends should fit snug against each other and a small buckle should have to be worked out if the length is correct.

Once you have the fit, run adhesive in the channel and on the ends of the seal where the two ends meet.

Line up the ends of the seal so both sides are even, press into place and tape to hold.

That’s it. Now go around and press the seal into the channel to make sure it has not come loose and check the tape to be sure it is being held tight to the deck lid. If in doubt, add extra strips of tape. Wait 24 hours for the glue to dry and reinstall the deck lid.

DOORS

The door seals for the Tri-5’s are somewhat different depending on the model you are working on so the procedure for installing the seal will depend on which model you have. We are working on a Convertible, which would be the same as a hardtop and Nomad. If you are working on a sedan then you will install the door seals much the same as you did the deck lid, as the seal goes all the way around the door in the same manner as the seal around the deck lid. Start the sedan seal at the bottom of the door and work your way back around. We recommend installing the door seal clips at the spot where the two ends meet as well gluing them, for extra support. Installation of the clips and adhesive will be the same procedure for whichever model you have.

Door seals, as well as the 57 trunk seal, are held in place with little press in clips and adhesive. The clips serve to keep the seal aligned on the door and keep the seal from moving from side to side. The adhesive assures the seal will stay attached to the door until you want to remove it.
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First, test fit your seal to the door as you did the deck lid seal. Take care to line up each of the clips with its corresponding hole in the door.

If you can press the clips into their holes by hand, do so. Make sure, however, that the clip fits snug and does not fall out of the hole. If these clips fit properly they will need a little encouragement when you are installing them.

NEVER drill out the hole to make the clips easier to install.

Fit the seal all around the door lining up all the clips with holes.

Then, starting at one end of the seal, take a small block of wood and a ball peene hammer and press the wood against the seal where the clip is positioned.

Taking care to make a square hit, so as not to break the clip, hit the block of wood sharply with the hammer.

The force should drive the clip into the hole in the door attaching the seal. Repeat this on every clip on the door until you get to the other end.

Tear off a number of pieces of masking tape and line them up on the door.

As you work your way around gluing the seal use a piece of tape to hold the seal tightly to the door until the adhesive dries.

Go around the door and check your work to assure that the seal is tight against the door.

When you have done this properly, you will be able to pull the seal away from the door in between each of the clips, but the seal at the clips will stay tight.

Starting from one end and working your way around, you will put the adhesive on the seal. Pull the seal back between each of the clips and run a bead of adhesive on the seal back.

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Now you will install the “J” seal that runs down the front top of the door and joins the door seal. This seal channels water down the front of the door to keep your door panels dry. Water runs down the channel in the seal into a channel at the bottom and out through a hole in the door. Make sure the hole in the door is open and if it is not, open it or the water will not drain properly. This seal is held to the door with adhesive as well as two small clips at the bottom of the “J”.

Put the clip through the seal and press into the hole in the door.

The tip of the “J” where it contacts the door seal is pushed UNDER the door seal.

Here you see the drain hole at the bottom of the channel in the seal.

Test fit the long part of the seal to the door and then run a bead of adhesive the length of the seal.

Cut off a number of strips of tape as before and starting at the bottom position the seal on the door and tape the seal in place.

Here is how it should look when installed properly.

Wait 24 hours for the adhesive to dry and reinstall the doors on the car.

TIPS AND TRICKS

Our friend Rich Evans, owner of Huntington Beach Body Works in Huntington Beach, California, shared this trick to aid in the re-alignment of the deck lid and doors when you reinstall them on the car.

Drill two 1/8” holes through the hinges and into the doors and deck lid before you unbolt them. When you reinstall, all you will need to do is run a 1/8” pin or awl in each of the holes before you tighten to get both the deck-lid and doors back in alignment. The following pictures show you where to drill the holes, remember that you will drill the alignment holes before unbolting the deck lid and doors from the car.

The pictures show the hinges with the deck lid and doors removed.

Trunk Hinge

Top Door Hinge

Bottom Door Hinge

Alignment of Lower Door Hinge

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