

Installation Guidance

Model: BMW 3 Series 1986 to 1993 models

There is nothing technically difficult to prevent the average mechanically minded person from replacing the convertible top. After all the top is simply screwed / riveted and glued to the various parts of the frame. No special tools / sewing or trimming skills are required, you simply remove the old convertible top and fit the new one to all the relevant fixing points on the frame. There are factors which will affect the fit of the new top. Take a good look at the old convertible top for signs of damage or poor fit. This can sometimes be due to a worn or mal-adjusted folding frame that will need attention. Remember there is no substitute for some experience so don't expect it to be easy first time around. You should allow approximately 5+ hours to complete the task and a second pair of helping hands is advisable. Convertible tops must be fitted in a warm dry environment. The material will be pliable and easier to stretch when warm. These guidance notes will help you remove the old convertible top and install the new one in the correct sequence. As you remove the old convertible top you will get a much clearer indication of the re-fitting procedure. The old top will be a valuable point of reference during the installation of your new convertible top.

Tools required: Pop rivet gun and a selection of 1/8th rivets. 1/8th drill bits to drill out existing rivets and a selection of screwdrivers and spanners. Good quality contact cement.

Important:

Before removing the old convertible top check the new one carefully. Is the new top the correct model / colour / material etc? Are there any obvious signs of faults or damage? No point finding this out after you have removed the old one so please check the new top carefully. You can loosely drape it over the old one for direct comparison.

Removing old Top

Unclip front of frame and fold back.

- 1 Remove rubber seal from front of header rail and remove its steel retaining channel. Peel convertible top material away from header rail.
- 2 Remove top material from side frame uprights (behind doors). This is achieved by drilling out 2 off rivets at bottom of frame uprights to enable removal of rubber seal. Drill out a further 3 rivets to remove seal retaining channel and peel away top material from frame upright.
- 3 At rear of frame pull away the rubber seal from the rear frame rail. Remove screws to enable removal of rear seal retaining channel. Peel away top fabric from rear rail.
- 4 Working from the inside of the top frame peel away or if necessary cut away bow straps from frame bows to release top from frame.
- 5 Un-hook retaining wire from top of frame upright and feed out thru sides of top.

The old top should now be fully released from the frame.

Now would be a good time to check the frame for any signs of wear or damage. Check it moves freely both up and down. Check for any irregularities in its operation and that it is correctly aligned by checking the gaps between the frame, car body, tops of doors etc are correct and even on each side of the vehicle.

Installing new Top

Having successfully removed the old top you will already have a good idea how and where the new top fastens to the frame. These guidance notes will provide pointers to the correct installation order. Note you should take extra care when handling the new top and the folding frame. There are many unprotected sharp edges on the folding frame which have the potential to cause damage to the new top and the car body work. Take precautions to protect the bodywork and the new soft top during all phases of the installation. The fabric is tough but until it is fully installed there is always a risk of damage either by miss-handling or inadvertently trapping the fabric in the folding frame. The rear window is particularly vulnerable to creasing so pay particular attention to it when folding the frame back during various phases of the installation.

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The installation will commence at the rear of the car. With the frame up loosely drape the new soft top over the framework and carefully check that all fixing points can be aligned to the frame. Now would be a good time to check the soft top for any damage prior to the installation. Once installation begins we cannot be held responsible for damage that might occur during the installation.

- 1 The top is glued to the rear frame rail. Ensure it is properly centralised on the frame and start from the centre working out with equal tension to each side. Note the stitch line around the rear of the top should follow exactly below the bottom edge of the rear frame rail. This is very important because it will ensure the rear skirt forms correctly as you tension and glue the fabric around the rear rail.
- 2 Fix top around bottom corner of frame upright (behind doors). Check the rear rail installation is correct by pulling top taught over the closed frame and check rear window and rear skirt is evenly tensioned.
- 3 Feed side wires thru the sides of top. Wire will be located to frame later.
- 4 The next step is to tension the top and glue it to the front header rail. With one person each side of the vehicle pull the top evenly over the closed frame and apply tension. Mark the leading edge of the header rail location onto the inside of the top fabric. This serves to provide a line for applying the contact adhesive to the inside of the top.
- 5 Apply the contact adhesive to both the header rail and the corresponding location on the inside of the top. Note for better adhesion it is usual to put one coat of adhesive onto the top fabric and let dry before applying a second coat.
Proceed when the adhesive becomes tacky.
- 6 Again with one person each side of the vehicle pull the top evenly and as tightly as possible over the frame and locate onto the header rail. Note you should aim to tension and locate one side of the top to the header rail and then keeping the centre section of the top clear of the header rail locate the opposite side. This serves to ensure that both sides of the header rail are properly covered before pulling the central main roof section over the header rail. The problem with allowing the centre section to touch the header rail first is that the adhesive will grab the material and may not provide enough stretch in the fabric to cover the extreme side edges of the header rail.
- 7 Check bow straps on the inside of top line up with the frame bows. If they are short immediately lift the top fabric from the header rail and apply more tension. You will find this easier by lifting the material in small sections rather than removing the whole front from the header rail.
- 8 Re-fit side cable to location on hood frame
- 9 The sides of the top should be tensioned and glued around the frame uprights on each side of the vehicle.
- 10 Re-attach all remaining seal retainers / screws and fixings and re-fit all rubber seals.

The new top may be very tight at first. This is normal. It should be left up and used for a few weeks. Any excessive tension will soon dissipate with use. Never leave your top folded for more than 24 hours or shrinkage can occur. Observe car manufacturer's instructions when folding and caring for your top. When folding the top down always ensure the window folds without buckling or creasing. Many vehicles have inherent design problems / flaws which affect the convertible top. It is widely known that this model has a tendency for the frame to pinch and wear the fabric during normal operation of the convertible top. The rear window is also prone to creasing and scratches during normal operation. Check for signs of this on your old top and be aware that we have no control over factors which will cause premature wear and tear under normal operation. Such damage would not be covered under warranty.