

Leather Installation Tips

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1 Introduction

I thought I'd get the ball rolling on the installation tips, seeing as I appear to be the first one to receive the kit.

I must say, it's a very impressive kit. My living room smells like new leather now, which I'm sure is pissing off my wife, but alas...

I had to order myself a pair of hogring pliers, as I was out of town when people mentioned getting the installation kit from Eric. I just dropped by the local upholstery shop and bought some from their distributor. I got the most expensive ones, I think... like \$38 for a pair, but considering how much I saved overall, I was willing to splurge.

Anyway, here's my first tip... the headrests. Since I won't have the pliers until Monday afternoon, I decided to start on the parts that don't need hogrings. The most obvious starting point, then, is the headrests.

2 Tips #1 - #10

Tip #1: When you get your kit, take a look at the headrests (there should be two of them). See the little plastic edges around the opening? (You'll understand when you see them) Play with those edges until you figure out how they go together. (Hint: Fold one of the edges over, and tuck the other one into it.)

Tip #2: That's how the factory ones go together as well, so use that as a tool to figure out how to get the old ones off without cutting them.

Tip #3. Make sure your hands are clean and dry before you begin, especially if you ordered a light tan leather. :-)

Tip #4. Make sure you have a whole stack of quarters ready for the swear jar. You're gonna need them.

Tip #5. Once you've got the old headrests unhooked, figure out how to get them off. I got the first one off by compressing the foam on one side, then shimmying the leather up a bit. Then, move to the other side and repeat. Back and forth, back and forth until the whole thing is off. The real trick here is to make sure you compress the foam enough to slide the leather without taking any foam with it. TAKE YOUR TIME!

Tip #6: The plastic edges are not terribly sharp, but they are PLENTY sharp enough to rip the foam, so fold them so that they are on the OUTSIDE of the leather for both the removal and the installation of the headrest.

Tip #7: On the installation portion, I found it was easier to "hook" one end and then work the other end over a bit at a time. Be sure you put the new one on facing the right direction! Yes, they are directional! I noticed that the plastic flaps on mine were opposite the plastic flaps on the factory pieces, but they might not all be this way. The easiest way to figure it out is to look at the side panels. The pieces that come off should still have their shape, so you can tell which is front and which is back. Look at the side panel, and notice how it has a particular "lean" to it. Replicate that lean with the new leather, and you should be fine.

Tip #8: The holes (really slots) that the two metal rods go through are stitched to keep them from tearing. On mine, they were also stitched closed at one end. It looked like you were supposed to slip the rods through the open part, but the laws of physics and the non-elastic nature of leather seemed to make this impossible, so I just snipped the point where they were closed, and they don't look like they are damaged in any way.

Tip #9: If you do it right, you shouldn't have damaged your old covers in any way. I was thinking that when it's all said and done, there are going to be at least ten people out there with at least SOME salvageable portions of interiors (door panels, headrests, maybe a back seat or two). We should probably make these available in the Marketplace section at a heavily reduced cost for those who truly only need one or two pieces. Colors might not match great, but the prices should be right!

Tip #10: Take your time. I know I said this before, but I can't say it enough. It's very easy to get frustrated while you're doing this, and if you start with the headrests as I did, you've still got a LONG way to go. Don't let your frustration get the better of you. Stop, take a breath, have a drink, kick your dog (joke), do whatever you need to. But don't work on your interior when you're upset. If you think you're frustrated now, imagine how frustrated you're gonna be when

you have to explain to your wife how you ruined your brand new leather kit on the very first piece because you lost your cool!

I'll post some pictures in the morning, showing the first of (hopefully) several successfully installed pieces. Two headrests down, everything else to go!

3 Tips #11 - #22

Well, I'm still waiting for my hogring pliers to come in (should be here in about an hour or so), so I decided to get the ball rolling with the removal of the back seat. For those that don't know, the bottom (at least in the coupe) has two tabs that you pull on, then lift up on the front and slide it out. The back has four bolts, then you have to slide it up. I found that using a large flat screwdriver made the lifting up part much easier.

Once you've got the seats out, it's time to start removing the old hogrings. And that means, it's time for more tips!

Tip #11: Bend the old hogrings, don't try to cut through them. If you do it right, you can basically "unscrew" them almost like the big ring on your keychain.

Tip #12: Wear glasses or safety goggles if you do end up cutting the hogrings! No sense in losing an eye over this.

Tip #13: I highly recommend doing this indoors, on a carpeted floor. It's probably not that big of a deal when you're removing the old leather, but when you're installing the new stuff, you don't want it scraping on the concrete driveway or a dirty workbench.

Tip #14: Write down the number and location of every hogring you remove. You want to make sure that when it goes back in, it goes in the same way it came out. If you've got a digital camera, that's even better.

Tip #15: Get a small bowl or trash can to throw the old hogrings in as they come out. If your significant other steps on an old, sharp, rusty hogring, you're gonna be in deep doodoo.

Tip #16: Once you've got the hogrings off, you will notice that there are a few springs as well. **DO NOT BEND THE SPRINGS OPEN!** You should be able to unhook them carefully with some needle-nose pliers. They will also "unscrew" from the leather, just like the keyring idea above.

Tip #17: Once you've got the springs detached, the leather should come off of the foam. Now it's time to start transferring the rods from the old leather to the new. Move them one at a time, so they go in the right place.

Tip #18: On my new leather, the sleeves that the rods go in are not exactly where they were in the old seats, so I ended up cutting some holes in the sleeve to pass the rods through. Pull the sleeve away from the leather and **CAREFULLY** with an X-Acto knife. You'll find that the material they use for the sleeves is pretty strong, so don't worry about cutting it and making it weaker.

Tip #19: Related to #18, there were some curved rods that had no sleeves at all, so I got creative and hooked them to the straight rods at the ends. You'll understand when you see them.

Tip #20: Move the springs once you've got the rods in place. Try to approximate the same location on the new leather. I found that poking a small hole with the X-Acto helped, and then I just screwed them back over the rod, just like the keyring.

Tip #21: The springs will have a long end and a short end. The short end attaches to the leather, and the long end will attach to the rod embedded in the foam.

Tip #22: Your forearms are gonna take a beating on this, and so are your hands. Unless you're used to wrenching on stuff all day long, I'd suggest taking a break every half hour or so and letting your hands/arms relax.

Now, for something completely different, check out this picture.



If there was ever a good reason for installing tint with some UV protection, this should be it! This is what the foam looks like underneath the leather in the back seat. You're looking at the top of the seatback, where your head would be if you were sitting in the back seat. The leather here is folded inside out, and you can see the discoloration in both the leather and the foam. The outside of the leather shows no discoloration at all.

4 Tips #23 - #40

Wow, another day, another seat. I finished the back seat (both parts) last night. What do you think?



So, having the rear seat finished, I started on the passenger seat. Which means it's Tip Time!

- Tip #23:** When removing the seat, there's three very important things to remember. First, once you've removed the bolts, lean the seat back and unplug the wires underneath. Second, lean the seat towards the middle of the car and unbolt the seat belt. And third, when removing the seat from your car, BE CAREFUL so that you don't scratch or ding your paint with the seat rails.
- Tip #24:** Start with the passenger seat. If for any reason you need to go anywhere while working on the seat, at least you can still drive. For example, today I ran out of hogrings. If I had been working on the driver's seat, I'd have been walking to the upholstery shop!
- Tip #25:** When working on the rear seats, the hard part is the upholstery. When working on the front seats, the hard part is the mechanics. The leather covers themselves are very simple on the front seats. It's getting the seat belt tensioner, all of the cables, etc. off and back on correctly that's gonna chap your hide.
- Tip #26:** The seat bottoms for the front seats appear to be different for each side. Make sure you've got the right one before you begin. Just compare it to the original cover, and see which side things like flaps are on before you start installing it.
- Tip #27:** When removing the plastic pieces like the headrest tubes, tilt lever, etc., check for screws first. On the lever on the side of the seat back that lets you adjust the seat's tilt, there's actually a screw UNDER the little black picture of a seat. And the knob on that lever has a set screw as well.
- Tip #28:** The pieces where the headrests go are actually tubes that are about 6 inches long, descending down inside the seat. If you lie on your back and look up inside the seat back (after removing the back cover), you can see where the tube is. Pinching the tube ends together makes removing the tube much easier. Oh yeah, and the side with the adjustment button has a screw UNDER the button.
- Tip #29:** Once you've removed all of the plastic trim pieces, fill up your bathtub with really hot water and some dishwashing detergent. Let them soak while you work on the leather. At the end of the day, give them a quick scrub with a stiff nylon brush and dry them completely, then reinstall. They'll look better than ever!
- Tip #30:** Go buy a brand new blade for your X-Acto knife. You're gonna need it.
- Tip #31:** You're going to have to cut your leather a few times on the front seats. On the passenger side, I had to cut two holes for the headrest tubes, one long slit for the adjustment lever, and one hole for the rear bolt that holds the seat bottom down.
- Tip #32:** CUT SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY. Start small. Figure out where the center of the hole you need is, and then just poke a hole through. Try threading the bolt or inserting the plastic piece, and see how it fits and where it binds. Then remove the piece, cut a little more, and repeat. It's much easier to make another cut than it is to undo a bad one.
- Tip #33:** You can use the existing holes as ballpark locations for the new holes, but don't just lay the old over the new and use it as a stencil. The new leather might not end up in the same place as the old did, due to stretching.
- Tip #34:** Get a wet rag and keep it handy. The seat rails and some of the mechanical parts are gonna be greasy, and you don't want that on your new seats. Check your hands often.
- Tip #35:** The bottom edges and corners of the seat rails are sharp, so be ready. And don't try spinning the seat on the carpet. It will just snag and probably tear. I took the old leather from the back seat and laid it on the floor (leather side down) and placed the passenger seat on top of it. Having the leather side down makes it slide really easily on the carpet. Just make sure you've got all of the hog rings out of the old piece first.
- Tip #36:** When you remove the seat bottom, the seat back is going to be heavy enough to try and tip the seat frame over. I'd recommend doing all of your work with the seat all of the way forward.
- Tip #37:** With no bottom holding it steady, the seat frame will want to "twist" on you. One part of it is sprung to go backward, and one part isn't. Go ahead and let it twist, just be sure not to let it snap and hit you or pinch a finger.

Tip #38: While you've got the seats out, you might as well give the car a good thorough vacuuming. And since you're gonna vacuum, you might as well shampoo the carpet. It's much easier to do without those pesky seats in the way.

Tip #39: Unless you have a really good reason, I'd hold off on putting the seats back in until all of them are finished. No point in getting your greasy hand print on the back seat as you're taking out the front seats.

Tip #40: Don't let that wet rag that you used to wipe the grease off of your hands sit on the tan colored carpet in the living room!

That's about all of the tips I can think of for now. As a bonus, I've included a before and after shot of the passenger seat for your viewing pleasure. Enjoy!



5 TipsPart 4

After many days and quite a few small cuts on my hands, I'm finally finished with the large portions of the install (all of the seats are finished).

In this picture, you can see the impetus behind ordering the kit in the first place. Like most Legend owners, my passenger seat was showing a little wear, but was otherwise ok. My rear seats were in great shape, too. But of course, the driver's seat was shot. In my case, it's due to a combination of two things. First, wearing my company ID badge on my left hip (it has a sharp metal edge on the clip). Second, carrying my cell phone in my back left pocket. Between the antenna and the metal clip, I did a real number on the leather, as you can see.



I'm happy to report that the installation of the driver's side leather went much faster than the passenger side. Due to the weight of the motors and stuff, the seat doesn't twist and tip over all of the time.

I can only think of a few more tips for now.

Tip #41: There are a lot more wires underneath the driver's seat than there were on the passenger side (at least in my L coupe with a non-motorized passenger side). The cords were a bitch to get unplugged, so I ended up propping the seat backwards with a really long screwdriver while I unplugged them.

Tip #42: It seems that some really sharp scissors work better at making holes in the leather than the X-Acto. I use the knife to start a hole, then shape the hole with the scissors.

Tip #43: Not sure if I mentioned this before, but you have to remove the seat belt presenter in order to remove the seat bottoms from the front seats. Unplug it from one end, then unscrew three long phillips screws. There's also a small spring that needs to get unclipped, and then it should pop right off.

I'm debating whether or not to even install the door panels, since I think the new leather might clash with the faded plastic. I'll do a dry run first. I'm also not sure if I'm going to replace the seat back panels from the front seats. It looks like a real nightmare stapling them down!

Also, if anyone can figure out the best way to install the new center armrest, I'm all ears!

Once I finish reinstalling everything, I'll post pictures for everyone.