DIY MIDGET/SPRITE 1275 & 1500 HOOD FITTING

Before You Start

A Midget/Sprite hood takes around two to two and a half hours to fit and requires no special tools to achieve a first class finish. To dispel a popular myth straight away, there is no need to use glue in fixing the hood to the header rail, so by following these instructions if you wish to adjust the fit of the hood to the header rail, you can.

Some tools that will be needed are: craft knife, screwdrivers (both crosshead and flat bladed), pop rivet gun, electric drill and chalk. If you need to ('if' because they're usually pre-fitted) screw together the two halves of a 'Tenax' pull-button fastener, it can be adequately done with a bradawl or similar pointed tool but is somewhat easier with a Tenax key. To fit the press on Durable Dot hood fasteners you will also need a hammer, plus a centre punch or preferably a punch and die set (available from the Club).

Before attempting to fit your new hood and before removing the old hood, place the new one carefully in position over the frame and check to ensure that (a) you have the correct hood for your car; (b) all seams, welds and materials are undamaged and (c) preview the fitment in critical areas of the hood, namely round the side windows and the header rail.

When fitting a hood, ensure the job is carried out in a warm atmosphere such as a heated garage or in a sunny spot. It also helps to place an electric fan heater, set at 1 kilowatt, inside the car. Heat has the effect of allowing the material to stretch, making it more workable and preventing undue stress.

Removing the Old Hood

Unclip all fixing points and fold the hood back. Remove the rubber seal from the front header rail and remove screws and drill out rivets fixing the aluminium seal retaining strip. This strip may now be removed. Unscrew the seven fixing screws securing the rear stainless steel bar. The hood can now be removed from the frame.

The old rivet heads will now be loose inside the header rail. Where the hood has been replaced before, you may find a 3/8" hole in one end of the header rail, which has been created to shake out these rivet heads. Remove the header rail from the frame by unscrewing the six crosshead screws. If necessary drill a 3/8" hole and having removed the rivet heads refit the header rail to the frame.

Check the condition of the hood frame to ensure that joints are not excessively worn and that the overall shape is retained. A worn frame will cause the new hood to fit poorly. If

the frame is sound but shabby this is also a good opportunity to spray the frame and improve its appearance.

Fixing the Rear Skirt
Place the new hood in position around the rear skirt and retain by fixing the six pre-fitted Tenax fasteners (three either side). Position the rear edge width over the existing screw holes to allow the lower edge of the stainless steel bar to align with the top edge of the hood binding. Refix the bar in position using self tapping screws (stainless steel, preferably) through the hood material into the original holes.

Header Rail Fitment
Open the hood frame approximately 18 inches from the windscreen. Either side of the front of the new hood you will find a strip of fabric measuring approx. 4" by 1". Position one side along the underside of the header rail where the rivet holes are. Now fold the edge of the hood over the header rail. View the side gutter and adjust the position of the hood so that the stitched seam of the lower binding aligns with the lower edge of the header rail. The foremost position of the gutter, i.e. its point, should now be located where the bottom edge of the header rail meets the seal retaining channel.

Now position the aluminium seal retaining channel and fix using a screw in the first two holes of each side only. Repeat this process on the other side. The hood should now be neatly fitted in these two most important areas.

The frame may now be carefully closed. Pull the surplus hooding material at the centre of the windscreen downwards until the tension at the centre is equal to that at the sides. View the fitment of the gutters around the side windows and clearance around the door openings and make sure they are correct.

Mark the bottom of the header rail line with chalk onto the hood fabric with a series of dots or short lines. Release the header rail clamps and pull the hood between the aluminium seal retaining strip and the header rail up to the point where the chalk mark is aligned as before.

Secure the remainder of the seal retaining strip with screws or rivets. Use a spike to find the rivet location holes in the header rail. The pop rivet gun is ideal for this job, providing quick fastening and firm location.

Trim off any excess material with a craft knife. Refit the rubber seal, easing it into place with a wide blade screwdriver. Secure the corner flap to the underside at each end of the header rail with one screw. This weatherseals the valance.

Fixing Studs and Finishing Off
Taking each of the side window valances in turn, re-fix using the valance retaining Durable Dot fastener on the top corner of the aluminium windscreen frame. Mark off with chalk and punch through or use a leather punch for a neat locating hole.

Now position and fit a Durable Dot press stud to connect to the post at the top of each of the windscreen pillars. These can be easily fitted either by using a centre punch or preferably a punch and die set (available from the Club). A length of wood underneath provides a safe, firm location on which to strike the Durable Dot fastener.

A worthwhile improvement to the appearance and draught proofing on a Midget hood is to fit an additional Tenax post to the Velcro strips located at either side just behind the doors, using the existing holes. Tenax fasteners can then be fitted to the corresponding points on the hood. 1967-68 cars will have these posts anyway, in place of the Velcro which was a 1969 onwards (and not entirely successful) production modification. If you are fitting a new hood to a 1967-68 car, you will need to order two extra Tenax fasteners at the same time as you place your hood order and fit them yourself, since all hoods are manufactured to the 1969 onwards Velcro-fitted condition.

Remember to leave your newly fitted hood in the upright position for at least twenty four hours after final fitting. This will allow it to stretch and assume the shape of the hood frame.

Before folding down the hood, refer to your drivers' handbook and go over the sequence for carrying out this operation. This will help prevent accidental damage and preserve the longevity of the hood.

General Care

Finally a few basic rules to keep your hood as good as the day it was fitted: use only warm water and a sponge to clean your hood. This is particularly relevant to double duck and mohair hoods, as detergents will cause fading. For stubborn stains use a mild hood shampoo such as Renovo, well diluted, restricting its use only to the dirty area and rinsing well afterwards. Sea spray and the effects of strong sunlight may cause bleaching if the car is exposed excessively. A hooding dye made by Renovo is available which is easily applied by brush to recolour a faded hood.

Never fold the hood straight back without first releasing all the fastenings and then fold the rear of the hood neatly. Be particularly careful in cold and frosty weather as the hood's windows become inflexible and may crack if folded or scraped clean.

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