



TClinic

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TC DOOR REPAIR

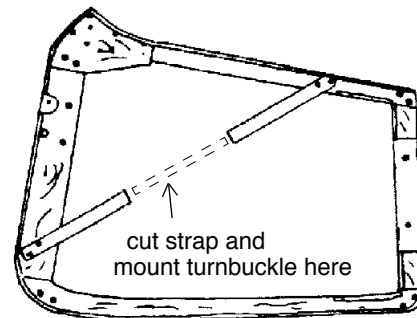
Poorly fitting doors are one of the most aggravating problems that plague our cars. Although most of the problems can be laid at the doorstep of advanced age, it has been said that the MG Car Company used to solve the problem on the assembly line by trial fitting doors until they found one that would fit the particular car.

First of all, as installed by the factory, the bolts securing the door hinge to the body are fastened through only body wood and very light gage metal. These bolts support the entire weight of the door when its open and, over a period of time, wear in the penetration for the bolts causes the door to “sag” when it is open. To correct this problem, it is only necessary to install a relatively heavy gage metal backing plate inside the body quarter panel that the hinges bolt nuts can bear against. Make sure that the backing plate is of metal substantially heavier than the body metal and that the surface area is large enough to distribute the force of the door over a larger area of the quarter panel extending the plate about an inch on either side of the bolt holes should do the trick. In order to properly drill the side of the bolt holes in backing plate, it is best to use the door hinge itself as a template.

Another place that is worthwhile to install a metal backing plate is where the door striker plate is screwed into the wooden front pillar. The wood screws securing the striker plate bear the full force of impact when the door is closed and it isn't too long before the striker plate isn't tight anymore. As in the previous case, be sure that the backing plate is large enough to spread the force over a large area of the door pillar and insert it between the striker plate and the wooden door pillar. A little trial and error fitting will be necessary to ensure that the striker plate isn't displaced so far inboard that it doesn't engage easily with the door latch. If this proves to be a problem, you can trim down the door pillar underneath the striker plate to adjust the clearance.

Having done all this, do you find that the door fits snugly near the latch, but sticks out at the bottom? If so, then it isn't tensioned properly. A metal strap that is fitted inside the door is designed to provide diagonal support for the fairly flexible door and to keep the lower leading edge of the door tucked in where it is suppose to be. The fit on the entire leading edge of the door will vary rather dramatically as the tension on this strap is varied. One way of tensioning the strap is by crimping it. However

getting exactly the right amount of tension is quite difficult. A much better way of adjusting the tension is to replace the center section of the strap with an adjustable turnbuckle which you can purchase at any hardware store. Just cut out a section of the strap equal to the



relaxed length of the turnbuckle. The turnbuckle can be secured in place of the removed section by either brazing it in or by using epoxy. I used epoxy and this is probably the easiest way for someone who doesn't have his own welding rig. Use regular body repair epoxy and wrap a 12 inch strip of fiberglass cloth around the joint. Work epoxy into the cloth prior to covering it with the next layer of cloth. Let the epoxy set up overnight and then reinstall the strap on the door. By rotating the turnbuckle very slowly you can “fine tune” your door for the best fit.

Courtesy of J. Garfield - Classic MGT's of Hawaii
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Also see TClinic #29 - Damn Those Doors

Remember not to lean on your doors once set up correctly.

When you have everything lined up and working right though learn how to close the doors properly. Rather than just swinging the door shut, twist the exterior handle or pull back the interior handle before bringing the door to the closed position and then let go. This will save a great deal of wear on the striker and keep the door latch in working order longer.