

Z3 Rear Window Installation

by
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The steps shown below are those that we used to successfully replace the rear window on my 98 M Roadster. It has been almost 10 months since we did the installation and so far there have been no problems so I am assuming we did it correctly.

The old window



Step 1 - Purchase new rear window from dealer.

Here is the part number. Also note the yellow label next to the part number. As you can see, it advises the parts person that there are no installation instructions in the package and they are to copy the instructions from their service CD and give them to you. My parts man did not do this even after I made a second request.

Original BMW
1 Stück
Heckscheibe E36/7
54 31 8 401 027
Made in Germany



verwendbar bis:..... 13. März 2003

Ersatzscheiben-Nr.: 25861

D Achtung
Dieser Nachrüstsatz enthält keine Einbauanleitung: siehe EBA-CD.
Die Einbauanleitung ist auszudrucken und dem Kunden mitzugeben!

SB Attention
This retrofit kit does not contain any installation instructions
- see installation instructions CD.
Print out the installation instructions and give them to the customer.

F Attention
Ce kit de deuxième monte ne contient pas de notice de montage : voir EBA-CD.
La notice de montage est à imprimer et à remettre au client !

NL Achtung
Deze naderhand in te bouwen set bevat geen montagehandleiding (EBA-CD).
De montagehandleiding moet worden uitgedraaid en aan de klant worden overgedragen!

S Obs
Denna eftermonteringsssats innehåller ingen monteringsanvisning.
Monteringsanvisningarna på CD-skivan skall skivas ut och överlämnas till kunden!

I Attenzione
Questo kit per il postmontaggio non contiene istruzioni di montaggio.

Step 2 - Make sure you have all the parts.

In addition to the window itself, there should be a plastic "tool" bag taped to the inside of the box. This tool bag should contain the following:

1. A white plastic window tool (used for pulling the top from under the window bead and also for inserting the top fabric under the new window bead).
2. A 2 ½ inch strip of double-sided tape - to cover the ends of the zipper.
3. A zipper pull - to zip the new top into place.
4. Two zipper clips - used to keep the zipper from unzipping after installation.

Here's a photo of what you should have: (the ruler's just for scale)



Step 3 - Loosen the top latches and lift the top slightly to take the tension off the top.

This is essential, especially when zipping in the new window and resetting the top in the bead.

Step 4 - Freeing the top fabric from the rear window bead

In order to access the zipper clip it is necessary to free the top from under the rear window bead. This is where the "window" tool works it's magic. Starting from any point on the window, insert the pointed end of the tool under the bead and run it completely around the window. This will pull the top fabric from under the bead.



Step 5 - Remove the old zipper clip

Once you have freed the top fabric you can remove the old zipper clip. The top itself is zipped onto the top. The zipper ends are held in place by one zipper clip (if it's the original window) and you will find it a really interesting challenge to remove this clip since it has been factory crimped. Each "finger" of the clip must be straightened and then the clip can be removed. I found that a thin blade such as an old knife blade or screwdriver will start the process and then you can use needle-nosed pliers to finish. **Be careful not to cut the top or you're SOL!!** The challenge is in accomplishing this while in a very uncomfortable position. You know how much fun it is to clean the inside of your rear window, so now imagine holding that position for 5 - 10 minutes while trying to free a clip that is about 1/2 inch wide and crimped tight and in a very dark place. The good thing is that there is only one clip. These photos are taken from the passenger compartment.



This is a photo of the zipper clip taken from outside the car.



Step 6 - Remove the old window

Now that the old zipper clip has been removed, the removal of the old window is a snap. All you have to do is open up the zipper. I did this with my finger and just ran it up the zipper and it separated easily.



If everything works as planned, you should now have this.



Total time to this point is about 20 minutes.

Step 7 - Cleaning the old adhesive from the top

When you look inside the flap of top fabric you will probably see some residue from the old adhesive. This must be removed and the fabric cleaned so that the new adhesive will hold.

This is what the old adhesive looks like. You can see the little white specks on the fabric. That's the old adhesive.



I used Stoner's Xenit and it did a great job, but you can also use alcohol or other solvents as long as they're not very strong. Actually, there was so little residue on the fabric that I could have probably just rubbed it off with my fingers. It is like rubber cement.

Step 8 - Time to install the new top

Take a deep breath and try to do this right the first time (I didn't). This next set of steps may well be the hardest of the entire project - lining up the zipper and getting all the zipper teeth to match and mesh all the way around the window.

Both the top and rear window zippers overlap and it is critical that you start the zipper on the innermost (the one farthest away from you if you're inside the car). If you don't you will end up like me and have the window all zipped in only to find out that you can't remove the zipper pull because it's been zipped in. Learn from my mistake or don't say you haven't been warned. The top and window also have "blue" starting tabs on each end. They are the same length. If you carefully line up these tabs and insert the zipper

pull, the teeth should mesh exactly. This is a photo of the zipper tabs on the top. The tab at the top of the photo is the one you should start with.



Below is a shot of the zipper tab on the new window.



This next photo is of my mistake of starting the zipper on the wrong tabs but is good to show the matching on the tabs and how the zipper pull should be started. Notice that the blue tabs are lined up and that the zipper teeth are meshing perfectly. Also notice how the zipper pull is started, with the rounded end toward the zip direction. **Also notice that I started on the innermost tabs - DON'T DO THIS! Start with the outer tab!**



Once I got the zipper started about this far, I inserted one of the new zipper clips but did not fasten it. I just wanted to hold the zipper together while I zipped it completely.

Do not zip the top completely. Leave about 2 or 3 inches unzipped until you have checked the entire length of the zipper to confirm that all the teeth are meshed completely, especially in the corners. This will help if you have to go backwards with the zipper to reset the teeth. If you take the zipper pull off, putting it back on is a b*\$ch - trust me! This step is also critical since the top is not under stress right now (only you are) and once you fasten the top down the zipper could separate, so take the time to check and double-check the zipper. You will need a flashlight to see this. Actually, we found that our digital camera did a great job. We took flash photos of all the corners and then could look at them without going through all the contortions to see them with the flashlight.

Here's the zipper near the end



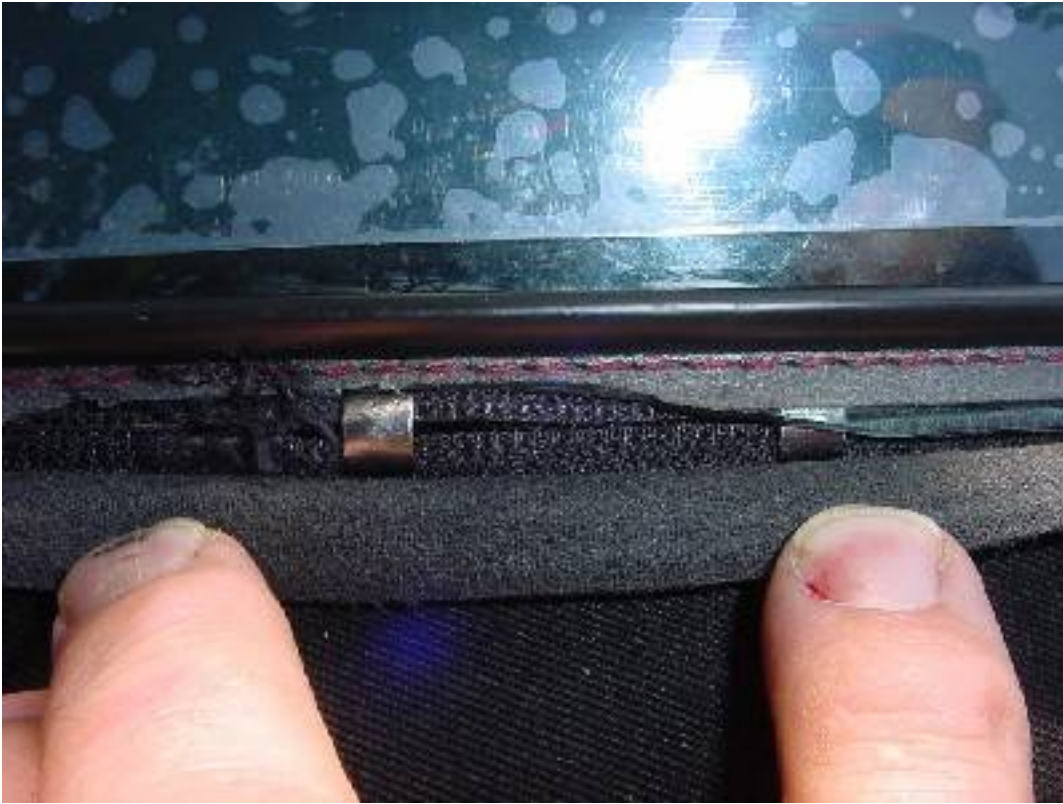
One corner properly meshed.



Step 9 - Install the new zipper clips and the double-sided tape

Now that the zipper's been checked and double-checked, you can remove the zipper pull and install the zipper clips. You will read that other people have only installed one of

the two clips supplied, but I chose to install both. It looked to me like the pins of the clips were only long enough to go through one layer of zipper, so I installed one at both ends.



After the clips are in place, put the piece double-sided tape across this opening. You need to do this because it's the only spot on the new window without any adhesive. Only remove the tape from one side of the tape at this time.



Step 10 – Resealing the rear window

The new rear window comes with adhesive applied to it and covered with a protective plastic strip. This adhesive really didn't seem to have any holding power, so we added our own. Once you have installed the window, you will need to apply adhesive to the fabric flap surrounding the window. Since no additional adhesive comes with the window and the parts man made no recommendations and I had no BMW instructions, I went with my gut instinct. There are other posts that say to use aquarium sealant or contact cement, but I chose to use good old rubber cement. The reason I chose rubber cement is that that's what the original adhesive looked and felt like. It wasn't very tacky and it was not difficult to remove. Aquarium caulk (clear silicone) will seal very well but it will also be a bear to remove should you ever have to replace the window again.

Contact cement will also create too strong a bond and may also create problems on a future replacement. The rubber cement is holding fine so far.

Anyway, if you use rubber cement, both the top fabric flap AND the plastic around the window must be coated with the cement and allowed to dry BEFORE allowing the parts to touch. We used strips of plastic made from the plastic sheets that protected the new window in the box. We coated one surface, allowed it to dry, inserted the plastic strip, then coated the other surface and let it dry. When we were ready, we removed the plastic strips and pressed the two surfaces together. It worked! Also, don't forget to remove the protective strip on the factory adhesive.

Removing the factory plastic adhesive protector



Applying the rubber cement. Notice the plastic strip.



Step 11 – Pressing the top and the window together

After the cement dried, I removed my protective strips and pressed the two surfaces (fabric and window) together. This required two people. I had my wife put pressure on the glued area from inside the car while I did the same outside and together we pressed the surfaces together.

Step 12 – Inserting the fabric back under the window bead

Here's where you use that handy window tool again. This time you insert the tip of the tool into the bead and slowly pull it along the window. The fabric flap should very easily slide under the window bead.



Step 13 – Voila!! You’re finished.

Let the cement have a chance to cure and harden while you go and pour yourself the congratulatory beverage of choice and admire your work. Now you can fasten the top back down. You are the proud owner of a brand spanky new rear window that from this day forward you will have to baby and pamper more than you do your wife, husband, significant other or children. Aren't you glad you did this??



Total time (if everything went as planned) – 1 ½ hours