

## Replacing Your Automotive Carpet

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Nothing is more miserable or disgusting in a car than dirty and smelly carpet. Have you ever spilled soda, milk, motor oil or even bleach on your vehicle's carpet and thought to yourself that it would be nice to just replace the whole thing instead of trying to clean it? Well, it's actually possible to do just that, and the job isn't as difficult as you would think. Many people find it more cost efficient to replace their auto carpet, instead of trying to clean the dirt or smell from a soiled auto carpet.

### What to buy?

Auto carpet can be purchased pre-molded to fit the form of your vehicle's floor pan. So, you do not need to buy flat automotive carpet and try to fit it to the bumps and ridges of your car's floor, but rather you can simply pull out the old carpet and drop in the new, pre-formed auto carpet. Buying this form of automotive carpet will make the job much easier and will eliminate most of the work. Sometimes, if you have a newer model of car, you can still buy carpet from the manufacturer, but in most cases the original OEM carpet will be 4 or 5 times more expensive than aftermarket auto carpet, and the quality of the carpet fibers can be inferior to the aftermarket carpet.

It is important to note that there are 2 types of automotive carpet backing. Most new cars, from the 90s and newer, have a type of backing/padding called Massback. It is a heavy foamlike rubber that is usually black. This type of backing is added to improve heat and sound insulation as well as some padding under the carpet. Most aftermarket auto carpet is made with a thin, plastic backing that doesn't add much in the way of padding or heat/sound insulation so most aftermarket auto carpet manufacturers will add a 1/2 inch thick jute padding to this type of carpet backing to add some padding. Some aftermarket carpet retail stores will sell you the same carpet with either type of backing.

The first thing you will need to do when replacing your auto carpet, is to purchase a carpet kit for your particular vehicle. It is important to point out that now would also be a good time to buy a matching set of floor mats from the same retail store where you buy your carpet. Most manufacturers cut your molded carpet and floor mats from the same roll of carpet and to ensure that you get the same exact die lot; you should order both at the same time.

### Where to start?

Be sure to pull the new auto carpet out of the box as soon as it arrives, since it will be rolled up and crammed into the box. The carpet will need about 24-48 hours to "relax" and regain its shape. Sometimes, letting it sit in a warm room, or direct sunlight will help speed up this process.

Once the carpet has relaxed, you can begin the job of installing the new auto carpet. The first step will be to remove the existing carpet from the vehicle. You may need to remove the sill plates by the doors, the seats and seat tracks if they are holding down the auto carpet and the center console. Basically, anything that is holding down the carpet will need to be removed in order to get the carpet out. Be careful not to destroy the existing carpet, and certainly do not throw the carpet away or discard it, as you will need to use it in a few minutes. Just set the carpet aside for the time being.

Now you should do a little prep work on the floor of your car to get ready to install the new carpet. At this time you can remove the old carpet padding, if any was left behind, but be sure not to remove any body insulation from the floor. You can install heat or sound insulation such as Dynamat at this time and patch or repair any holes in the floor of the vehicle. And it should go without saying, but sweep and clean up any dirt or loose matter from the floor of the vehicle.

### How to Install

Most aftermarket auto carpet kits will come slightly oversized and without the pre-cut holes. So, there will be a little work to get the new carpet into the car. There are 2 methods of cutting and trimming your carpet to get it into the vehicle; you can choose which will work best for you. Your first option is to place the new auto carpet over your

old carpet, trim the edges and cut the holes. If you chose this option, you will need to be very careful not to over cut the holes or cut too much from the edges, since you are using the old carpet instead of the vehicle itself. The 2nd option is to work the new carpet into the contours of the vehicle floor and trim the carpet as you go. This method will give you more accurate results, but may be a little more difficult. Either way, it is important not to cut and trim too much with any one cut. It is best to work slowly, making small cuts and double check that the carpet has not shifted after each cut.

A little secret for making the small holes for things such as the seat bolts is to make a small "X" cut with a knife blade where the hole was in the original auto carpet. You can then simply push the bolt through the carpet. There is usually no need to try to cut a complete hole in your new carpet.

Occasionally you will find that a small section of the auto carpet wants to lift up off the floor, or tries to create a small wrinkle. This can easily be fixed with a small shot of spray adhesive. It is not recommended to spray the entire floor of the car, since the molded carpet should be held in place with the seats and trim pieces that were holding the original carpet in place.

Once the auto carpet is in place, and trimmed to fit, now you can begin to replace the pieces that were holding the original carpet in place. If you removed the seats, sill plates and trim pieces, then all of these pieces will need to go back into the vehicle.

Once all of pieces are back in place, your job is complete. You will be amazed at how much difference a little work can make to the appearance of your vehicle, not to mention removing that horrible smell that some things like milk can leave behind!

### **Short note about the author**

Todd Speary has been working in the automotive industry for many years and now owns Stock Interiors, which sells custom made automotive interior products such as molded carpet, headliners, floor mats and much more. You can find them online at <http://www.stockinteriors.com>

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