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DIY headliner removal and overhead light replacement mk5 VW Jetta

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Introduction

This page shows how to DIY remove a sagging and falling down headliner fabric on a mk5 (mkv) VW Jetta (Golf and Passat similar)

A common problem on mk5 Volkswagen Jetta, Golf (Rabbit), GTI, and Passat is a sagging headliner. While a fabric headliner is considered upscale vs. "mousefur" headliner coverings, the foam backing is unusually susceptible to heat and humidity. VW also trimmed the cloth a cm too short and stretched the fabric too tight in the corners.

Volkswagen customer care will sometimes replace headliners, even if the car is out of warranty. There are reports of original owners getting refused but many forum reports of even second owners getting their headliners replaced or at a discount. VW's decision process is unknown and they refused my request so I decided to replace it at my own expense, hoping they'll extend warranty coverage later (LOL, fat chance) on an obvious and widespread design defect.

If you wish to remove the sharkfin antenna or sunroof motor, the headliner also has to come out. If the sunroof drains are broken, it's easier to fish in new lines, otherwise the headliner also has to come out.

I considered re-covering the existing headliner with new fabric but my exact part number was on sale so I just replaced the whole thing, hoping they changed the glue or made some other design changes, and to make this article as informative as possible. Unfortunately, once I got my new headliner, I saw it was actually trimmed worse as shown below: the new headliner didn't have the sides and rear folded back over like my old one did (late 2005 build date).



While my headliner was sagging by the sunvisors and overhead console corners where the fabric was under the most tension, others report sagging and headliner separation at the sides and trim holes like the rear dome light. Below are some example pictures I found online. Trimming the fabric too short will make any side separation worse so I just hope my new part is better. I don't think the glue is the problem because (at least on mine) the foam backing failed, resulting in fabric drop. If your foam backing is still intact then the glue failed.



I had some dark brown suede-look fabric but didn't want to use it because all the grab handles and other roof trim was gray and I would have also had

to reupholster the side pillar trim. If you use dark fabric, make sure to use high quality stuff or else it will fade quickly and can stain from glue soaking through. High quality fabric, especially stuff rated for upholstery, is thicker and UV resistant. Any upholstery shop can help you with re-covering the headliner backing but it's best if you remove the headliner from the car yourself. Reusing the old fabric (or using thumbtacks to hold it up) is a temporary solution because it'll have dust and lint that will prevent the glue from making direct contact with the old fabric and I believe that the foam broke down and separated in my case.

Tools and parts

T20, T25 torx screwdriver, phillips screwdriver
10mm socket (for battery)
fine pick
plastic trim removal tools
10mm triplesquare (for removing seats)

3m super 90 (if you wish to glue new fabric)

optional, read procedure first: sunvisor/grab handle clips (quantity 10-14), VW# 1k0 867 633
optional, VW# 3b0 867 333, these are the white trim plugs

Jetta headliner part numbers

The part number varies according to your equipment so double check the PN with the dealer against your VIN when buying!

Rain sensor/no rain sensor headliners are the same except for a small hole cut out for the wires, more detail on this at the end of the writeup. I bought one w/o rain sensor because it was cheaper and cut a hole. The rear sunshade headliner has 2 small holes for the resting hooks. They're barely visible and at the very rear upper corner so if you don't care about them and cheaper, you could use it as well. As far as I know, only 2005.5 models came with the rear sunscreen.

without sunroof, no rain/light sensor, no rear sunshade: VW# 1k5 867 501 h
without sunroof, with rain/light sensor, no rear sunshade: VW# 1k5 867 501 j
without sunroof, no rain/light sensor, with rear sunshade: VW# 1k5 867 501 k
without sunroof, with rain/light sensor, with rear sunshade: VW# 1k5 867 501 L

with sunroof, no rain/light sensor, no rear sunshade: VW# 1k5 867 501 m
with sunroof, with rain/light sensor, no rear sunshade: VW# 1k5 867 501 n
with sunroof, no rain/light sensor, with rear sunshade: VW# 1k5 867 501 p
with sunroof, with rain/light sensor, with rear sunshade: VW# 1k5 867 501 q

Color code suffixes, read [1000q: how to read VW and Audi part numbers](#) for how to add the color code suffixes.

dd9 - anthracite (light black, example is above)
3u5 - beige (kind of yellowish, up to 2009)
6k8 - pearl grey (shown in this article)
5r0 - corn silk beige (build date 4/2009-2010)

Procedure to replace a sagging headliner (roofliner) on your Volkswagen Jetta

NOTE: If you have a beige headliner, wash your hands every few steps unless you want to have smudges and handprints all over your new parts and side trim! I've seen some nasty installs so you've been warned.

If you have a Golf (Rabbit) I believe you can get the headliner out the hatch without too much trouble.

If you have a Jetta it's a lot harder: you have to remove the front seats and if you don't want to heavily bend the headliner, remove the center console. To remove the front seats, see [1000q: front and rear seat removal](#). Even with the front seats in place, you'll have to bend the heck out of the headliner and there's a good chance you'll bend a line in it. Because there's a thin layer of foam under the fabric, a tiny bend should not be noticeable. The amount of bending will be very high - I ended up breaking the rear "horn" of the headliner to get it out. See the pictures of the headliner below for reference.

If you don't want any bends in the headliner, remove the center console, see [1000q: center console removal](#) for instructions. While this seems like overkill, the rear horn prevents you from getting it out easily. With the center console and front seats removed, you can slide it in and out without bending it, but just barely.

Disconnect the battery negative terminal and isolate it. Step on the brake pedal a few times to discharge any stored electricity. See [1000q: battery removal](#) for more details - you'll have to reset seat memory and the 1 touch windows when done.

Wrap rags around the steering wheel - it'll get scratched from wiggling the headliner out if you don't.

Remove the overhead console. First gently pry the sunglasses holder out. There are some clips at the top holding it (use your trim tools here) and snap down the middle panel. Remove the 2x T20 screws under it and 2x phillips screws. Then unclip the blue plug (overhead lighting) and the sunroof dial plug (pulls straight out). You can now see the 2x T20 torx screws holding the overhead console surround trim. Remove the trim. (click to enlarge the thumbnails) Note the screw colors/heads.



Remove the sunvisor bases and grab handles. Use a pick to pop their covers off and remove the T20 screws anchoring them. The sunvisor wiring cannot be disconnected so just let the sunvisors hang for now. (click to enlarge the thumbnails)



Remove the a-pillar trim: Remove the fusebox cover. Pop out the lower pillar trim clip at the top. Lift up to remove.



Use a pick to pry out the plastic airbag badge. Remove the T25 torx bolt under the badge. Gently wiggle-pull the trim up and out. Remember to wash your hands a few times during this procedure because the back of all the trim panels will be really dirty.

There are some white plastic plugs that hold the trim to the pillar. They may be in the pillar after you remove the trim, put them back for installation. Use the trim tool that looks like a mini crowbar to pull them out because they'll be stuck in the body. The white plugs are VW# 3b0 867 333. You could buy 2 beforehand just in case but 1 piece of missing trim won't prevent you from driving the car so I'd just buy them later if needed. Here is an empty slot, one with trim snap plug in place, and one with a plug next to it. (click to enlarge the thumbnails)



Remove the b-pillar trim: Remove the airbag tag but first note the torx bolt underneath it - it's different so set it apart from the others. Slide the seatbelt adjuster to the top (if it was at the top before you can't see the torx bolt). Use your trim removal tool to pull/pry the aft edge-bottom of the trim towards the rear of the car (there's only 1 snap plug indicated below). The trim then comes down. Let the trim hang off the seatbelt as there's no need to remove it.



Remove the c-pillar trim. Remove the airbag tag and the torx bolt underneath it. There are a number of hooks along the top which you have to gently pry out. Don't pry against the inside unless you can see the back because the side curtain airbag and radio wiring is behind this trim!

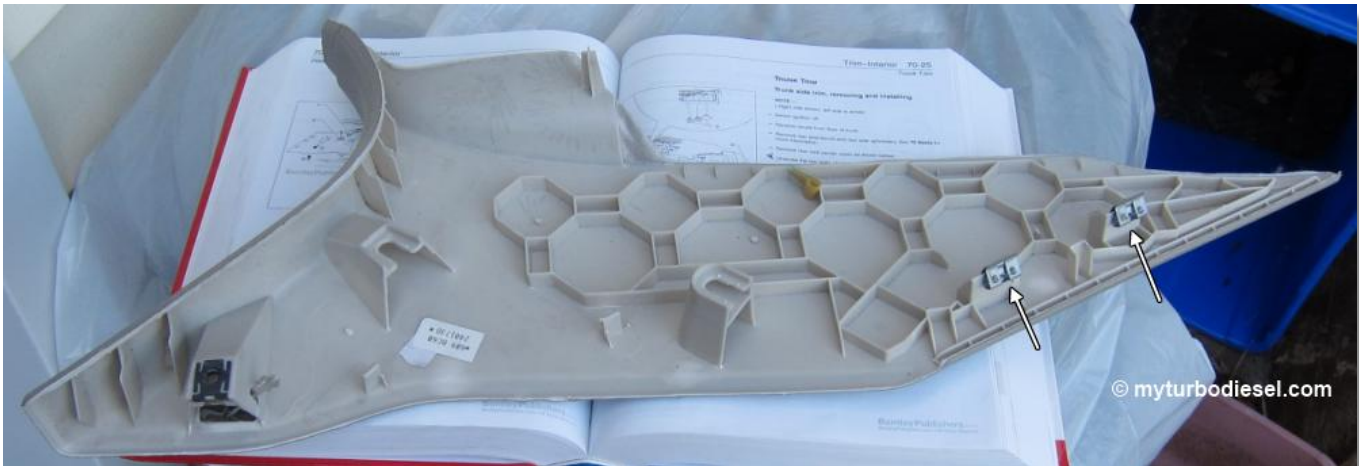


C-pillar installation is easier without the side seat cushion in place. If you want to remove it later, might as well remove it now. It's held with 1x 10mm nut at the bottom of it. Just press the seat bottom corner back as far as it'll go and you'll see the 10mm nut. Then pull the side cushion up to release the hook at the top. During installation, make sure the hook at the top is engaged in the body.

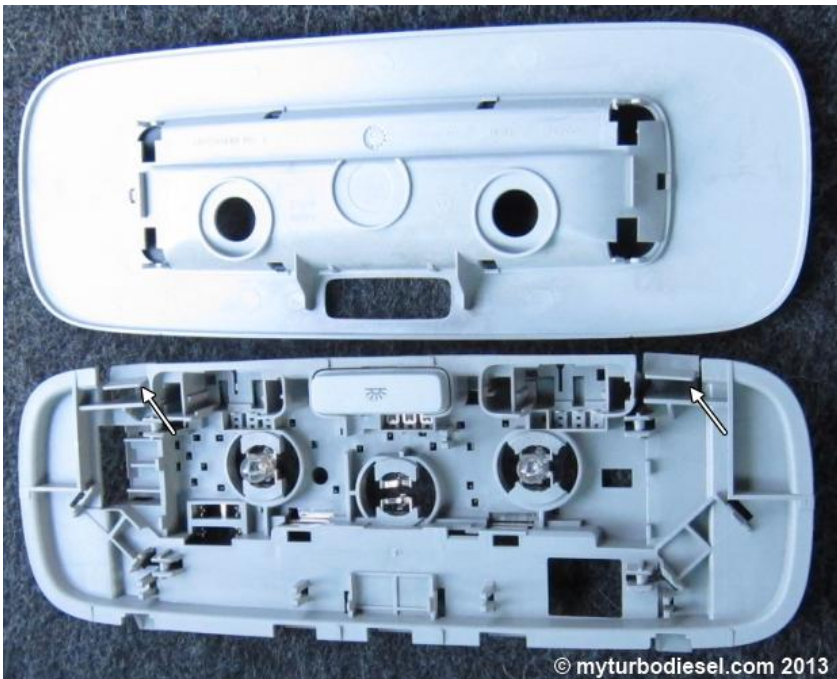
Remove the T25 bolt shown below (yellow arrow). Here you can also see the 2 white snap plugs and the location of the hook clips.



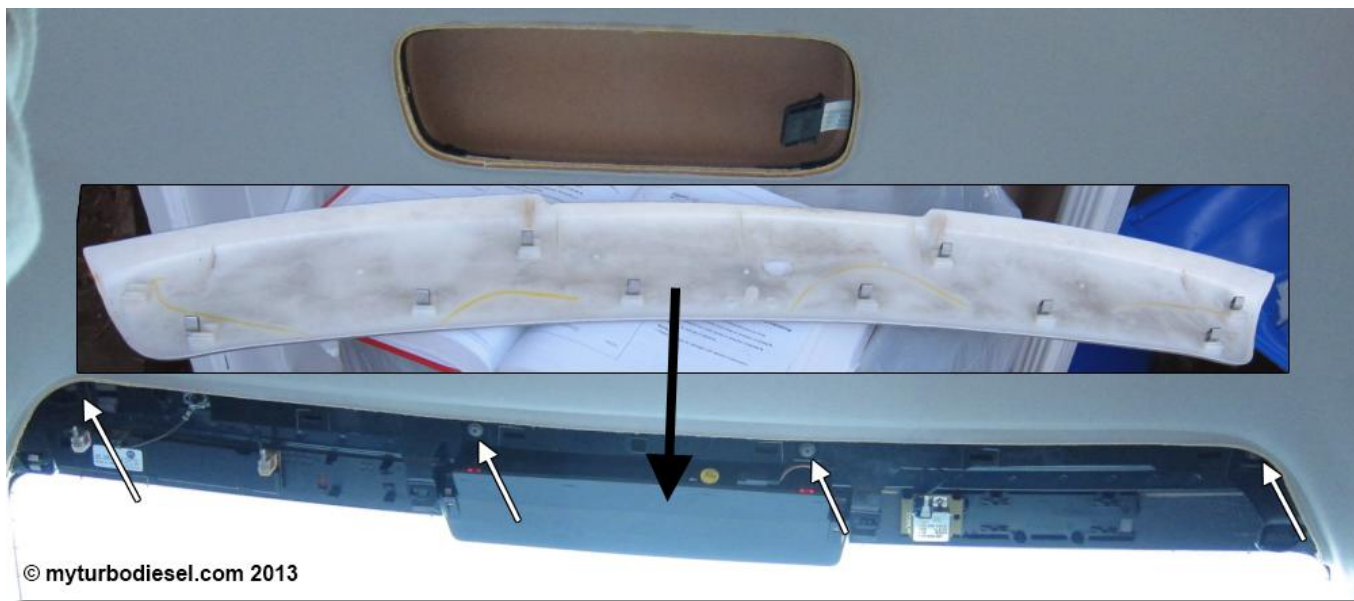
If any metal tabs get pulled out along with the trim as shown below, check for bending and put them back. On my c-pillar trim, 2 came out - put them back so it looks like the above picture. Repeat trim removal for the other side.



Remove the rear dome light. Its wiring is attached to the headliner so you can remove it now or after the headliner is off the car. If you're going to be doing a lot of headliner bending I'd just remove it now. Pry off the cover and there are 2 hooks at the rear of the light that hold it in place (white arrows). Release the hooks and the plug underneath (visible in next picture).



Remove the rear headliner trim. It's held with 10 snap tabs. If any are still stuck in the roof, remove them and put back on the trim for installation. 2 of the snaps are in the rear brake light so use caution when prying them out. Remove the 4x T20 bolts (white arrows). Keep all the rear bolts on the rear shelf so they don't get mixed up.



Pull the top of the rubber door gasket down - note how it's tucked into the headliner and body. The headliner is now loose. Reach above it and disconnect the sunvisor plugs. You have to get the headliner out the front door opening. During assembly I think they put it in through the front windshield.

Compare your old and new one for any differences. In addition to the lights/wiring, I had to remove the rear dome light blank on the new one (unclips) and glue on the foam thing around it from the old one. My new one also had 4 clips in the front, more detail on this below. This picture was taken with a wide angle lens so it's distorted but you can see the horns at the bottom which caused so much trouble.

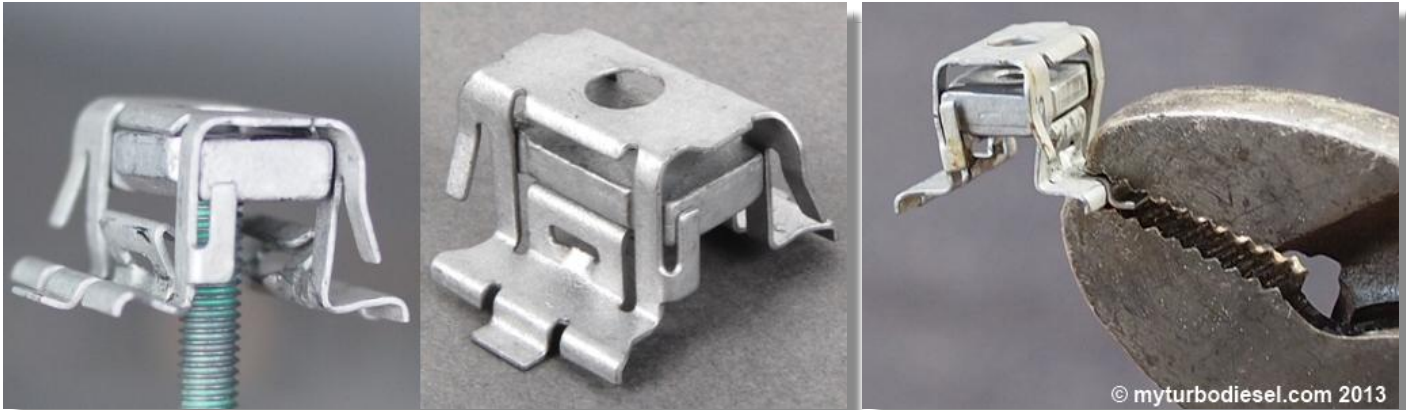


If you wish to reupholster the old one, use a stiff brush to scrape off all the foam on the backing or else the new fabric won't stick well. This is why regluing the old fabric won't work. Make sure to read the instructions on any contact adhesive you use - you normally have to spray both surfaces, let it dry, and then stick it on. I typically use 3M super 90 adhesive.

Pre-install the grab handle and sunvisor clips in the headliner before putting it back. Below is a thumbnail of the grab handle bracket and the plastic backing for it. **Lightly snug** the bolts just enough to hold the brackets in place and when you install the headliner, press the brackets and they'll snap into place. The brackets will hold the headliner up. After all the brackets are snapped in, wiggle the headliner to check for alignment and tighten all the bolts to 2 ft-lbs (2 N-m). Of note in this picture is the rear sunroof drain (blue line). As you can see, it's a major pain to replace it if it leaks.



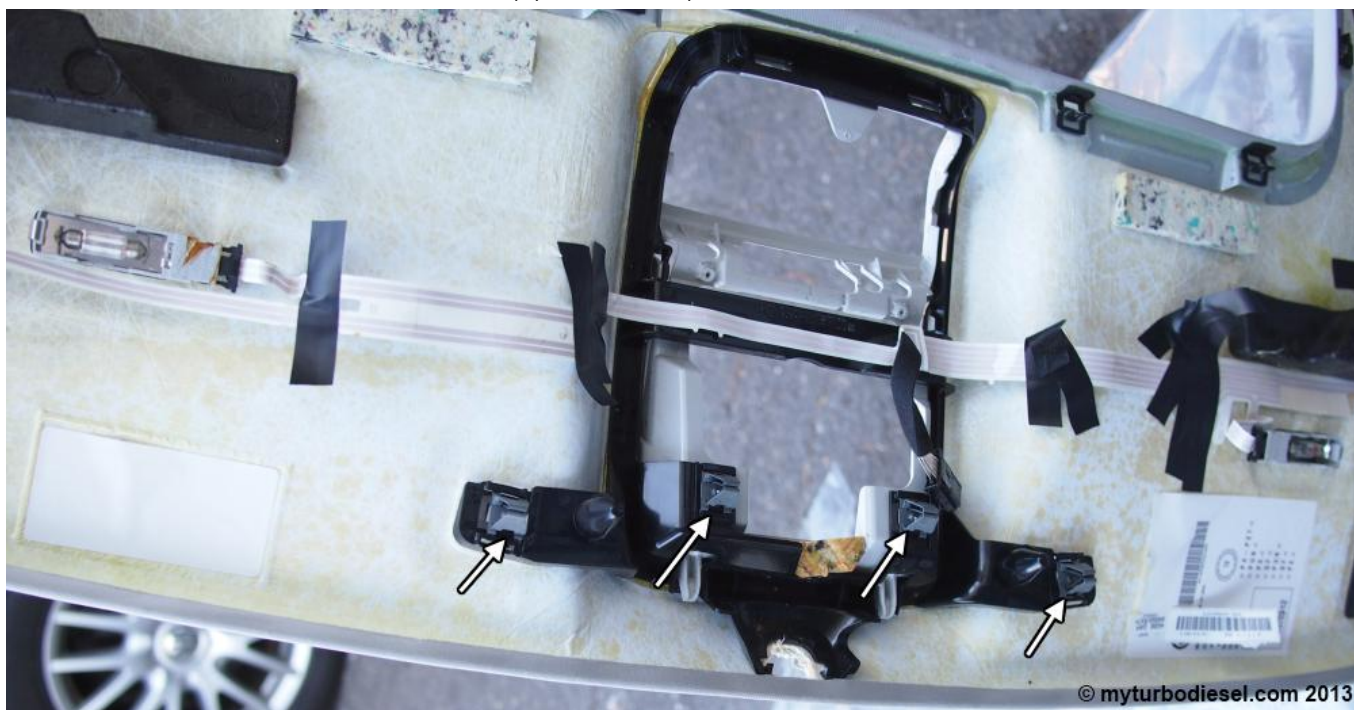
While it's possible to not pre-install the brackets, it's best for 2 big reasons: They'll hold the headliner up during installation and because the screw anchors can move around inside their brackets. If the anchor slides out the side by going diagonal, it's gone until you remove the headliner again. If you're unlucky, it'll be stuck inside the body and rattle until you go insane. Also, the bolt can't be tightened since there's no anchor for it to screw into so you'll end up with the grab handle in your hand. You're supposed to replace them each time because when the bolt is fully tightened, the anchor is pulled down and smushes the sides out to lock the bracket in place as addressed in VW TSB# 68 07 04, Feb 14, 2007 2013840. Below is a picture of a used one and new one (new picture from ecstuning.com, they retail for under \$2 each). I reused mine by bending the side thingys back into place for installation.



It should look like this: On the right is the sunvisor bracket anchor. Transfer over the headliner wiring and the overhead lights.



My new headliner had 4 V-clips where the old one used 4 deformable brackets. If your new headliner is like this you only need 10 of those brackets instead of 14. Make sure the holes on the roof are empty for the new clips.



The rest of installation is the reverse of removal. Press the rubber door gasket back after you get the headliner in place. Run a credit card along the sides to tuck the edge of the headliner back into the gasket. If you found this article helpful, feel free to use the donation button at the top - all donations are much appreciated, thanks in advance! Even the official \$80 Bentley service manual doesn't describe how to remove the headliner.

In case you noticed the hole cut in the front of the headliner, it's because the replacement headliner for rain sensor equipped cars was about \$90 more than the one without the rainsensor - the only difference is the hole for the wiring and it's hidden behind a piece of trim anyways. Obviously, if you don't have the rain sensor don't get the rain sensor headliner or else there'll be a hole there. To retrofit the rain sensor, see [1000q: rain sensor retrofit mk5+](#). Headliner replacement time is the easiest time to put in the rain sensor wiring and when the windshield is out it might be possible to get the headliner out through the windshield hole without removing all that stuff.

If you have any questions about this procedure, feel free to ask at the [myturbodiesel.com forums](#) or search the site below:

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