

Volvo 1800 Dash Pad Replacement

(courtesy of John – Garden State Chapter – Volvo Club America)

Reupholstering the dash

Well it has been some time since I have been online in the forum. Winter is a quite time for classic car owners. I had two winter projects on my plate and thought I would start a thread with the first one - redoing the dash on my 1800E. Actually this project has been on the "to do" list for 3 years. I had even bought the plastic caps from Duane some time ago.

Well the availability of the original dash pads by IPD changed my mind. Why not do the job correctly I said and sent my order in. The old caps I sold at discount to Robyn.

I wanted to document the process for everyone as this is not a job to be taken lightly as 1) the pads are expensive \$\$ and 2) the process involves a) taking all the instruments and other objects out of the dash b) removing all the electrical and mechanical connections c) taking the dash out of the car d) disassembling the dash e) removing all the old pads and material.

And then you start all over in the other direction. This is where I currently am and will fill the processes in some sections as I get some time in the next few days. So far I am happy with the results.

Re: Re upholstering the dash

oof i did that a 2 years ago you have no idea the pain of getting to those bolts for a newbie afraid to take out the seats i was hurting for weeks after that not too mention i did it in the dead of winter my one bit of advice the two bolts in the corners are more pain to reach then they are worth just get out all the other bolts and cut the two annoying devil bolts i honestly don't even remember how the hell i got them out Good Luck

First steps - Disconnecting everything

Well here goes. I got some pictures on my provider's web server so we will see how this goes. This first post will be short just to see if I can figure out the picture link

Start - here we go before the start of everything with the old cracked dash.



Getting ready for the job

Before I start, just one piece of advice I got many years ago from a friend and have had reinforced though experience. Before starting on a project like this, be it re-doing the dash or restoring the entire car, document and label every step and every part. Let me repeat that:

DOCUMENT every step. I make a journal and start with step 1, describe what I am doing to take the part off, wire connections or mechanical connections, draw little diagrams, and lately use my digital camera for complex visualization. Then step 2, 3.....

LABEL every wire and part. I go through a ton of Ziploc bags. Each one is labelled with the number in the journal. Nuts, screws removed in step 1 are in bag 1. Each wire is tagged with a number. I am red/green color blind so those old wires with red on white or green on white are numbered.

When I restored the 1800 originally in the late 80's, I completely disassembled the car (except suspension). The car took 1 year in the body shop to re-do (as a fill in job at lower cost when they had time). I would have never remembered after this time. Lately I am not sure if I could make it to the next day.

OK, enough preaching. On with the job. This is how I proceeded (according to that journal I told you about).

Took out the radio. No issues here as I had wired a molex connector when I installed the radio. (For reference this is the 1970 Volvo AM/FM I bought on eBay and had converted to a full stereo with aux inputs by Antique Automobile Radio <http://www.antiqueautomobileradio.com/>. Looks OEM and sounds great. Next steps were taking out the vent tubes on the right (2) and taking off the heater control (3 screws). You can leave the cables attached. Then the steering wheel. The cover pops off

and then remove the horn mechanism. Take care with notes here as this is electrically insulated from ground with washers, etc. Remove the nut from the steering wheel. After that, remove the wheel. Some people have had problems here but I lubricated way back so no problem. Then came the cover for the turn and overdrive levers

Now for the gauges. Oil pressure (don't forget that there is a direct connection to the engine. When did you replace the rubber part?), clock, gas tank. Now for the speedo and tach. Just the same drill. Look, label, diagram... Then the switches on the lower right. Panel lights and rear defrost (the knob screws off then the bezel unscrews). For the cigarette lighter, the back unscrews. Mine required waiting until I had the dash out as it was stuck. Then the ash tray (the screw is inside).

Then the same for the switches on the left. A note here as later E's and ES's have toggle switches and it is a bit different. OK, wipers, fan, lights and warning the same sequence as before.

Last are the two instruments in the middle, the oil and water temp. Now we come to the fun part. To get the dash out, at least for me, you need to loosen the steering column by removing the bracket nearest the steering wheel. For at least the 1970E, these bolts have had the heads taken off (anti-theft). For me no problem as I drilled those out when I did the original restoration. If you have to do this figure on a while of frustration:

So here we are with everything in the dash disconnected and ready to remove the dash.



[Yanking out the dash](#)

For those of you who really looked at the picture, you are right. I am not ready because I have not taken off the directional and turn signals. The screws are hard to reach so it is a bit easier to loosen up the dash first to get more "wobble room"

To take off the dash there are two bolts on each side of the dash (1/2" socket). Then harder are 3 smaller bolts on the left, center, and right almost near the windshield from the bottom. Once these are out, the dash is free. Now the screws for the turn signal are easier to reach and the overdrive

switch can come out. On the sheet metal holder for these on the steering column are a couple of tabs which I bend a bit.

No real directions for this. The dash comes out. It is a tight fit on the sides and you need to get the steering column out through the dash at the same time (which is why I think you need to loosen up the steering column). OK - yank and pull, twist and turn and voila it is out!



The naked interior.

[Taking the dash apart](#)

OK, the dash is out of the car. Time to move to the working area. All the other little things need to be removed - overdrive light, cigarette lighter (after some WD40), etc. The grab handle is held on with two nuts on the back of the dash



The next step is to separate the top part of the dash from the bottom. Two bolts on each end and 5 screws along the interface.

Separate the two pieces and remove the faux wood pieces between the dash and in the two switch panels if already not done.

Now the fun part. Remove all the old padding and clean the underlying sheet metal form well. An interesting observation here. This is a piece that was obviously hand done to finish from the solder and other aspects. Sure the basic shape came from a press but the finish was by hand.

My top part of the dash had a lot of rust. Evidently at one time water got on the dash and under the pads through the cracks. Some rust. Time for the wire wheel on the Dremel and some elbow grease. Then some progressive grades of paper. Finally Robyn's favorite thing, POR-15 rust preventive paint.



The top dash cleaned and painted. Ready for covering

Seat or no seats... that is the question

I am doing this with the seats in the car. I don't find it a problem and I have a place to sit and rest. As far as doing wood, you probably could do with a thin veneer over the aluminum backing that is there presently. I thought about it but my aim is to keep the spirit of the original as much as possible. Stay tuned for more.

Reupholstering the dash - finally

So everything cleaned and painted. Now to install the new pads. And they are just that. They have all the foam padding, etc. underneath to duplicate the originals exactly. I purchased the pads directly from IPD.

<http://www.ipdusa.com/ProductsCat.aspx?CategoryID=643&NodeID=1347&RootID=629>

Like I said expensive (\$779). The pads go on as with the originals, lots of little slip on U-shaped clips around the edge. Not difficult although I had to remove some excess foam at the very edges to work better.

After do-doing the top and bottom, the process is just reverse of the original. Start at the last entry in the journal and work backward. The two dash sections go back together with the screws and two bolts as described. Need to hold the "wood" between the two when re-assembling.

At last the dash is done and back together.



Next step is to put the dash back in the car (grunt, groan, sweat) and finally it slips in. Now the bolts can be attached the reverse process continued. This is where I am today. Took advantage of the nice weather to do the job. Next is to continue work on the switches and instruments re-installments but that will have to wait. Back on the road again for 2 weeks.
