

Fitting the Roof Lining of a Traction Avant

The roof of the Traction Avant is lined with cloth –like most of the cars of that era. The types and colours of the cloth have evolved over time, but the principle has remained the same. Fitting a new cloth lining is a job that can be done oneself, provided the new lining has been made as an exact copy of the old one, and all the materials that are needed to mount the assembly inside the car, are complete and in place. There are some minor differences between the roof linings of the small-boot and the boot-lid Traction Avant models. Ready-to-fit linings are available for both types from a number of Traction Avant parts retailers, essentially in two different colours: light grey and beige. They come with a simple fitting instruction which will work as long as it is followed to the letter. Some tips and a few pictures in addition to the written fitting instructions may be illustrative and helpful. Please note that these relate to the boot-lid Traction Avant model, but they will also be useful for fitting the roof lining on a small-boot car

General Description

The roof lining is hung from the roof by means of thin steel hoops that are attached to the car body by means of parker type screws and small hooks. The hoops are slid through support loops in the textile and the cloth is held in place by means of strips with small fishhooks above and around the door openings. The design allows for the cloth to be stretched in order to get a nice tight fit without folds and wrinkles. The transverse seams in the cloth mark the positions of the hoops, and between hoops the cloth appears to be a bit paunchy. The interior light and the sun visors are mounted after the roof lining has been fitted, requiring small cut-outs to be made in the cloth at the right places. The picture below shows the lining just after it has been fitted. The material still requires some further tensioning.



Preparation of Car

Note:

The roof lining of the car used in the example was fitted in the course of a general restoration job. It will become clear that other parts of the upholstery still need to be refurbished. However, for fitting purposes, the use of original components of the interior is important.

Before doing anything with the cloth lining, first ensure that all parts required on the car are there, are clean and without rust, and ready to use. This relates to all 7 hoops (each one of them is of a different length), all attachment strips with fishhooks, the wooden frame that will hold the interior light, the wooden and metal frames that fit around the rear window and the sun visor studs. The hoops will have to be fitted later with the cloth, so nothing should be in their way once they are mounted. Make sure the hoops are not buckled (straighten them out meticulously) and remove the sun visor stud on one side (the other one can remain in place) to allow easy mounting of the hoop that sits immediately above the windscreen. A small box or jar with some spare parker screws of the right types will come in very handy. Needless to mention that the cloth weather strips around the door openings must have been fitted by means of small textile nails or tacks, before the fish hooked strips are mounted.



Remove the steel frames from the windscreen and undo the two nuts that hold the instrument panel in order to allow the left hand frame to be removed completely. Make sure all hooks and fishhooks are open and ready to take whatever they are supposed to secure.



On the boot-lid Traction Avant, there are two pieces of carton that should go in the section between the rear doors and the rear window, on either side of the car. One is a smaller triangular piece. The other one has the shape of a large shell. Make sure to attach the small triangular pieces of carton as shown on the picture, using the screw of the hoop. The large pieces of carton

are only fitted after the roof lining is in place (and will be covered with seat cloth or imitation leather, depending on the model).

Shortly before starting the job, remove the interior light and undo the wooden and steel frames from the rear window. Also remove the back rest of the rear seat.

Tip: although it would seem easiest to remove all the furniture from the car before starting, one will find that working from the front and rear seats will make the job easier because one is positioned closer to the roof.

Preparation of Roof Lining Material



Before you start handling the roof lining cloth it is important to make sure your hands are clean. You will need to wash them quite often in the course of the job to avoid staining the cloth.

Carefully unfold the cloth and position it face down on a clean surface. Fold the cloth in half longitudinally with the loops on the outside. Mark the position of the fold on each of the loops. These positions correspond with the imaginary centreline running from front to rear through the interior of the car. Cut out a section of the loop material extending 2.5 cm (1 inch) to either side of the marking on all loops.

Feed the hoops through the loops in the lining material one at a time, starting with the one in the back of the car. Make sure the hoop will be in the same position as it was in the car (do not turn the hoops around).



Carefully collect the complete lining with the hoops in place and climb into the back of the car, holding the cloth in the right position.

The general direction is to work from the back of the car towards the front. Hang the hoop that is closest to the rear window on its centre hook. Make sure the marking on the loop is in the middle

and mark the positions of the other support hooks that will hold the hoops later on. Cut out openings in the loop of at least 2.5 cm (1 inch) to either side of the markings. This will allow the loops to slide along the hoops as the cloth is stretched later on. Repeat this exercise for all loops and support hooks. Now, hook on all the loops, starting with the aft most one, working towards the front of the car. Close the hooks by bending them such that the hoops are unable to come loose by themselves. Use the screws to mount the hoops to either side above the doors, etc.

Once the cloth is hanging from the roof and all the hoops have been secured, it is time to screw on the sun visor stud that had temporarily been removed. Very carefully pull the cloth aside and tighten the three screws. Fitting the sun visors themselves must wait until the very end.



Stretching and tensioning

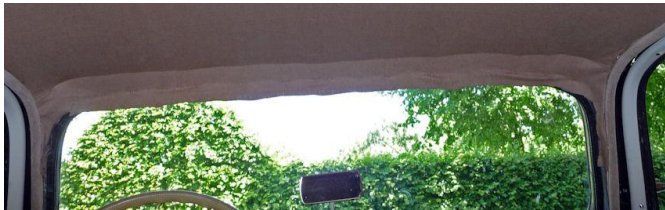
Start stretching the material sideways, once again starting at the back and working your way forward. Use a tacker to secure the cloth in position by shooting tacks into the paper or rope filling.



Now, very carefully start stuffing the excess cloth behind the fish-hooked strips, initially leaving the end of the cloth in sight. It is best to use a filler knife of which one corner has been rounded off to form a gentle bend. The other corner should be rounded off as well, but the bend can be a bit sharper. Work your way forward, starting by stuffing the cloth behind the strips just below the hoops, and then doing the part in between. Make sure to stretch the material equally to both sides. The cloth will start to sit nice and tight, sagging a bit between the hoops. That is exactly as it should be. It is recommended only to cut away excess cloth if stretching becomes difficult.

Now comes the time to concentrate on the surroundings of the rear window (the cloth will need to be cut out). Wait until the last to do this. First, while the cloth is still in one piece, the cloth should be fixed onto the vertical carton below the rear window, which follows the curve of the car body. Use some Bison Kit type spray glue for this. Spray glue on the carton only, not on the cloth since this will result in a dark stain. Neatly stretch the cloth to even out as many wrinkles as possible, then stick it to the vertical carton. Use the small piece of carpet that is meant to cover the narrow shelf between the back seat and the rear window. Be very patient and do not hesitate to undo some of the tacks that held the cloth in position earlier, and re-tension the material. Keep working until all the folds and wrinkles have disappeared.

Finally, cut out the shape of the rear window, leaving an ample border of cloth. Now, apply the wooden frame between the car body and the cloth, and fold the cloth around the wooden frame. Scarce use of tacked staples is possible, but be aware of the fact that the rim of the steel window frame is not that wide. Cut away some of the cloth near the sharp bends in the rear window to allow the material to be folded backwards. Use the steel inner window frame with the 10 parker screws to secure the wooden frame in place, holding back the cloth.



Carefully stretch the cloth that hangs down from the hoop over the windscreen and hook the material on the row of small fish hooks you will find above the windscreen. Then, carefully cut away the excess material to allow the lining to fit neatly

around the windscreen. The corners on either side are particularly difficult to get right. You will find that quite a lot of the surface will actually be covered by the windscreen inner frames. Fitting these is usually quite a hassle, using the spring clips along the top edge (they are identical to those used for the inner door panels) and the rubber anti-squeak and rattle fillers left and right of the centre piece that holds the rear view mirror. With some patience you will eventually get there.



Finally, all the other fittings should be mounted, carefully cutting or punching neat holes in the lining cloth: the interior ceiling light (activated by the “P” switch on the dashboard, which stands for “Plafonnier”), the sun visors and –in the case of the 15/6- the hanging loops behind the rear doors.



Once again, make sure to have clean hands when you start mounting these fittings. Also make sure the fittings themselves are clean (no dirt, no grease, no rust) before you install them.



Note:

The pictures used in this article were taken during and immediately after the job of fitting the roof lining. After a while, some re-stretching of the material at a few places is likely to eliminate some of the imperfections like folds and wobbly seems that can still be seen from the pictures.