

How To Restore my Steering Wheel?



Along with dashboards, steering wheels are the centrepiece of your car's interior, and with more and more people choosing to retain original ones or seek out period versions for use on their rods and customs we thought we'd take a look at what's involved in restoring one of those swapmeet or ebay bargains yourself at home. While chipped, cracked Bakelite wheels often look fit for the bin, provided they're not bent out of shape or missing huge chunks of the rim, most can easily be repaired at home with a [steering wheel kit](#), such as those available from [Frost](#).



Steering Wheel Repair Kit Frost Auto claim their kit will bring any tired steering wheel, gear knob or dash switch back to a show quality finish if used correctly. At £62, the [Steering Wheel Kit](#) is expensive but when you consider the prices that are asked for good period steering wheels these days, it doesn't seem so bad.

This kit comes with all equipment needed to get your wheel into primer, ready for a top coat of your choice, even down to the hacksaw, file and sandpaper. In the end, we found we had **enough filler putty left to repair a second wheel**, so that made it even better value.



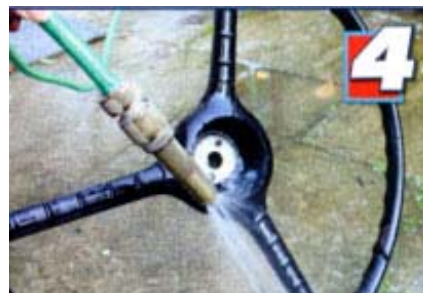
First stage is to assess how badly cracked the wheel is. You can see the steel core in places around the hub on ours, which is very common on vehicles imported from hot climates.



Then, screw the spray trigger onto supplied tub of [POR-15 Marine Clean](#), they give the wheel a thorough clean. This is good stuff!



This is why you should wear the [gloves](#). And this came off a wheel that was in use on a truck and looked to be pretty clean! Make



Rub the solution in with an old rag and repeat until you're sure it's clean, then give the wheel a rinse off with tap water. [Marine Clean](#) is

sure you work the cleaner well into all cracks.

environmentally safe so can be washed off safely in the garden or down the sink.



Once it's thoroughly dry, start sawing out all the cracks in the wheels. The idea is to get down to the metal core, not go through it, so go carefully with the saw supplied, not an angle grinder.



Follow this up by using the triangular file to 'v' cut the cracks a little to make it easier to get the putty deep into the cracks. This will also help you later on when 'featuring' in the joins.



Ideally, your wheel will now look worse than when you started, but don't worry, that's the idea. Make sure to file bevels into marks around the horn button edge, too.



Make sure the wheel is free from dust and debris by using a fine brush to get into all the cracks. You may choose to [Marine Clean](#) the wheel again at this point.



Line the POR-15 epoxy putty and hardener up next to each other and cut equal lengths from the two bars. Failure to mix equal amounts will affect the hardening process of the putty.



Knead the two components of the putty together with your fingers until it's one even grey colour and then roll it into a thin sausage, approximately 1/4 inch in diameter.



Form the sausage into a rough v shape so it'll better fit into the cracks you've made in the steering wheel. Now roll it round each split and wedge it deep into the filled-out cracks.



Feather the joins into the surrounding rim using your fingers, with a dab of water added if needed to help smooth it out. You have plenty of time as it takes about an hour for the putty to cure at room temperature, though we recommend leaving the wheel for a couple of days to completely harden, especially if you have big cracks to fill.



Using a strip of 100-grit [sandpaper](#) on the hard sanding board included sand all filled areas. Go carefully as you don't want to alter the shape of the wheel, and be especially careful around any finger grips or mouldings...



...these areas should be done by wrapping the [sandpaper](#) in the soft sanding black and squeezing it gently so it conforms to the shape of the finger grips.



Continue the process, gradually reducing (increasing numerically) the grit to finer grade sandpaper up to 320 grit, until you are happy the wheel is smooth enough to paint.



Finally, go over the entire wheel with the 400-grit [scuff pad](#), to give it a nice even key prior to priming.



Now you need to find a comfortable way to paint the wheel. Hanging them by the centre hole is okay, but they'll spin around and it's easy to get runs that way. We mounted ours flat on a pole held at chest height in a workmate so we could easily get to both sides. Makes sure to mask up the centre splines where the wheels attaches.



Now mix up the polyester primer surfacer following the instructions in the Preval sprayer that comes as part of the kit. You even get a tack rag to clean the wheel immediately prior to painting. We said this kit was comprehensive, didn't we?



Give the wheel a good coating on both sides, starting with a light dusting and then building up to a solid base coat. Now doesn't that look better? All it needs now is a top coat and a polish and it'll be good as new again. Good work, and well worth the time and money invested.

Do you know what Bakelite actually is ?

Developed at the turn of the last century by a Belgian Doctor, it's a compressed mixture of the toxic, crystalline substance phenol (otherwise known as carbolic acid), organic formaldehyde and very fine wood flour filler. Heated and super compressed, it becomes a hard, mouldable synthetic plastic. Given this, it's no surprise that it can be rubbed down, filled, painted, baked and generally treated like most other solid components on a car - though you wouldn't want to inhale too much Bakelite dust as that won't do you any favours in the long term.

[POR-15 Steering Wheel Repair Kit](#)

Cleaner: [POR-15 Marine Clean](#)

Primer: [POR-15 Self Etch Primer](#)

Sandpaper: [Soft Sanders Papers](#) available 60, 80, 100, 120, 150, 180, 220 Grits.

