

Jaguar XJ-S headlining replacement

If you are going to re-use the original “biscuit” from your XJ-S, it is essential to take great care when removing it; it often becomes fragile with age. Note: I did the entire process, from removal to refitting, alone. Depending on the model, it may be advantageous to remove the steering wheel, although this is not strictly necessary.

You will firstly need to remove the rear-view mirror, the sun visors (and their locking brackets), the front, horizontal pillar trim, the side trim and the rear pillar trim. They are all relatively simple to remove, but take care with the plastic “lugs” that hold the side and rear trim in place: they break easily.

It is not necessary to remove the front seats either to remove the headlining, or replace it. By moving them forward as far as possible and lowering the backs as far as possible (which isn't very far), this will give you sufficient room to work. The “biscuit” is attached to the roof by metal tabs on the sides of the roof, which must be carefully bent downwards, in order to free it. It is also held at the rear window on the rubber window seal. However, this is not a problem; it is a matter of carefully easing the fabric out of the seal.

Once free, bring the front of the “biscuit” down first and carefully rotate it 90 degrees and then remove through the passenger side door. The various components are made of material that crumbles easily, so take care when handling.

If your headlining fabric is as bad as they get, most of the foam backing will have disintegrated already into dust. It is then a simple matter of carefully peeling off the fabric, (which can then be used as a template) and then brushing off with slightly stiff brush and vacuuming up the remaining dust. It is also necessary to drill out the pop rivets holding the courtesy light surround metal in place. These two pieces form a “sandwich” with the “biscuit”. The fabric of the courtesy light surround plate should also be replaced, which is a simple task.

Depending on how well preserved the “biscuit” is, you may have to repair it. I did mine by using fibreglass resin and fibreglass tissue. One layer is usually sufficient, although the areas to watch for are the corners and around the courtesy light hole. Be careful to ensure a smooth finish.

The fabric from the other panels can be removed by careful breaking of the seal of the glue and pulling the fabric off slowly, working from one side circumferentially.

It may be possible to re-use the foam padding from the rear horizontal trim, which will only need to be re-glued in place.

I would suggest buying at least 10 feet of fabric (3 metres), in case you need to cut one or more pieces again.

Using the old fabric, carefully mark (using French chalk) around it on to the back of the new fabric. It is worthwhile being quite generous in the overlap; extra fabric can easily be removed, but not added! There is no need to have much overlap on the sides, although both the front and rear should have about 1.5 inches to glue to the board. Do not cut out the hole for the courtesy light; simply mark where the sides are and leave any cutting until the fabric is in place. I will explain this later.

Once you have cut the new fabric to size, re-cover the smaller panels first. Do not stretch the fabric. Carefully apply some contact adhesive (you'll need one that is heat resistant, as otherwise the new fabric will sag after it's been in the sun for a while) to the surfaces. Do not apply too much. Start at the edges, ensuring the fabric matches the contours of the board and

is stuck firmly. Once stuck to the flat surface, fold over and stick the overhang to the underside of the board. It is only a matter of being careful. It may also be a good idea to wear some clean, latex gloves, in order to prevent any stains. Also be very careful with the glue; it can be difficult to remove from the top side of the fabric!!

The main "biscuit" is not as difficult to re-cover as it appears. Start with the rear of the board and work forward. Apply adhesive to a section of the "biscuit" and lay the new fabric on top in the correct position. Glue in stages. I would suggest doing 8" sections, from rear to front (not side to side). Once the adhesive has been applied, carefully smooth the fabric on to it. Using latex gloves here also will prevent soiling. Also be careful with the application of the glue; it is very easy to apply too much. Work forwards and carefully smooth the fabric over the contours where the sun-visors sit. The fabric will stick to the contours without much pressure and stretching. It will also not crease, so long as you are careful and gentle with it. The key being to take care and time; do not rush this.

Once the fabric has been stuck to the "biscuit", carefully cut the holes required for the sun visor anchorages and rear view mirror screws. At this point, also, cut out the hole for the courtesy light. This can easily be achieved by cutting two triangles at each end and a single cut between the two, thus >-----<. Then fold the excess onto the rear of the board and glue in place. This should be stretched a little, in order to ensure a precise fit. Glue the overlap on to the underside of the "biscuit".

Once the glue has properly dried, it is time to re-fit the components back in to the car. By again carefully manipulating the "biscuit" in via the passenger door, then rotating it once inside the car (ensuring it is facing all the correct directions), offer it up to the locating lugs on the roof.. If the driver's side lugs have not been bent out of shape (which is a good plan), this will give the first alignment of the "biscuit". Offer up to the passenger's side and carefully bend the metal locating tabs, although not all the way back. It is advisable to allow some "leeway", as it will be necessary to move the "biscuit" to line up with the screw-holes.

Once the "biscuit" is securely supported, using a screwdriver or other implement, carefully locate the holes for the rear-view mirror. Take care when locating the screws; if they do not align themselves properly with the captive nut in the roof, the threads are quite easily stripped. Once the rear-view mirror is in place, it should be easier to locate and secure the sun visors. However, it may be necessary here also to use a screwdriver to properly locate and align the holes with the "biscuit". The "biscuit" will flex a little, which should not harm it. However, do take care not to apply too much pressure.

With the "biscuit" properly in place, bend the remaining metal securing tabs to their final position, then re-secure the rear, vertical boards, the side boards and finally the front, side trim. Don't forget to connect up the lights!

Once the main re-fitting is complete, turn your attention to the rear. The rear window's rubber seal has an extra "lip" which fits around the rear of the "biscuit". It isn't necessary to try to fit the "biscuit" into this from the outset. Using a wide-bladed screwdriver, or similar, blunt instrument, carefully prise back the rubber lip and fit it over the fabric/"biscuit". This is easily achieved by using thumb/finger(s) to push the fabric into the "lip" whilst prising it off the screen. It is quite tough, but so as long as the implement you use is not sharp, there should be no problem locating it correctly.