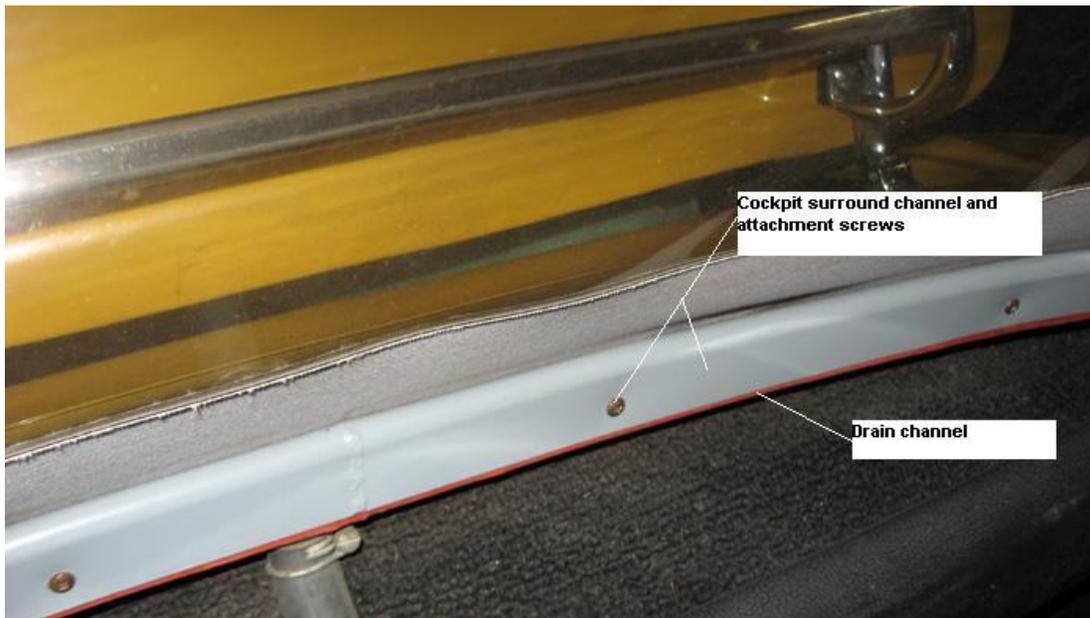


INSTALLING A CONVERTIBLE TOP ON A BJ8

1. Make sure that the left and right convertible top latches are set to the center of their adjustment so that they can be “tightened” or “loosened” if necessary to properly latch the top after the new top is installed.
2. Remove old top (top frame unlatched). Make a note of (and/or photographs of) the way the various pieces are attached to the front bow (the rubber bulb seal, the “fuzzy” seal, the vinyl-covered metal piece that spans the bow and has the flange for the “fuzzy” seal, the “hidem” strip, etc.). Top is attached with tacks and glue around the front bow and at the sides under the wood and metal pieces that hold the metal flanges for the window rubber seals. At the back, it is attached with barbed spring steel clips holding the top fabric to the cockpit surround channel. The 10 screws holding the cockpit surround channel to the drain channel have to be removed from inside the cockpit before the surround channel can be released.



3. The top is also attached to the rearmost frame bow by “curtains” or flaps that wrap around the bow (and are glued), and further secured to the bow by a removable curved channel piece about 1/2” wide that is attached to the bow with pop rivets.



4. If the two top webbing straps on the frame are going to be removed, remove and replace them one at a time. This will help to hold the bows in proper position.
5. Once the old top is removed, find and mark the exact center of the top frame. This can be done by having the top frame up and latched, and running a string from the center of the front bumper up over the frame to the center of the rear bumper. Once the string is positioned to mark the center of the frame, mark the frame center point at the front edge of the front (wood) bow and rear chrome cockpit surround . These will be the reference points to align the new top fabric. It might also be helpful to mark the center of the bow to which the 1/2" wide channel piece was attached, but mark it on the bottom where it can be seen inside the car.
6. Fold the new top in half, with the fold line running from front to back. With the edges of the top on each side carefully aligned together, mark the center of the top fold with chalk at the forward and rear edges of the top. This establishes the exact center of the top from side to side at the front and rear edges. Now fold the top the other way, so that the inside fabric is now outside, and mark the center of the curtains that will wrap around the bow and be secured by the 1/2" channel.
7. With the top up and latched, place the top on the top frame, aligning the center chalk marks on the fabric with the center marks made on the front bow, top frame and car body in Step 5.

8. On the inside of the top fabric at the rearmost bow, there are some “curtains” or fabric flaps. These are supposed to wrap around the bow and be glued in place (contact cement will work). After they are glued, the curved channel is pop riveted onto the bow, further securing the glued “curtains”. Make sure that the top is perfectly aligned with the center marks before gluing and securing the flaps.
9. After the “curtains” are secured, attention can be paid to the rear edge of the top. This is the tedious part. The top fabric is folded over the rear flange of the cockpit surround channel and fixed in place by spring steel clips with barbs. The cockpit surround channel is then attached to the drain channel with 10 screws. If you fold over too much fabric, the top will be too tight and you won't be able to stretch the fabric enough to align the screw holes in the cockpit surround channel with the matching holes in the drain channel. If you don't fold over enough material, the top will be too loose, although it will be easier to align the screw holes. This takes a bit of trial and error. ***Do NOT push the spring clips on all the way until you are satisfied that the top fit is correct at the rear. If you do and you have to pull them off again to adjust the fit of the top, the barbs of the clips will tear the fabric.*** You only need to push the clips on just far enough to secure the fabric to the cockpit surround temporarily. Only use the minimum number of clips to secure the top at the rear while checking to see if you can get the screws into the surround with the top fabric taut at the rear. When the top fits correctly, the lower edge of the plastic rear window will be parallel to the cockpit chrome piece at the rear and there will be no wrinkles in the fabric. The horizontal seam above the rear window will be parallel to the bow, and the fore-and-aft seam down each side of the top will be equidistant from the center of the car. It will be quicker and easier to check the tautness of the top at the rear/the alignment of the screw holes by using several awls (ice pick, or similar) in the screw holes, instead of trying to install the screws each time.
10. At the rear, work from the center alternately toward each side, testing the fit of the top at each step. It probably will be necessary to pull and stretch the fabric as you go around the rear curve of the top at each side. If you are patient, this can be done so that the top fits smoothly. Make sure that you keep the center marks aligned during this process.
11. After the top is secured finally at the rear, by installing all of the spring clips and cockpit surround channel to drain channel screws, move to the front bow. With the front bow latched, pull the top fabric forward at the center to stretch it taut while keeping the center marks of top fabric and front bow aligned. Pull the top forward and down over the bow. It will be necessary to have a few extra hands at this stage. While you pull the top at the front center, the helpers pull it toward the front and at the same time pull any wrinkles out toward the left and right sides.

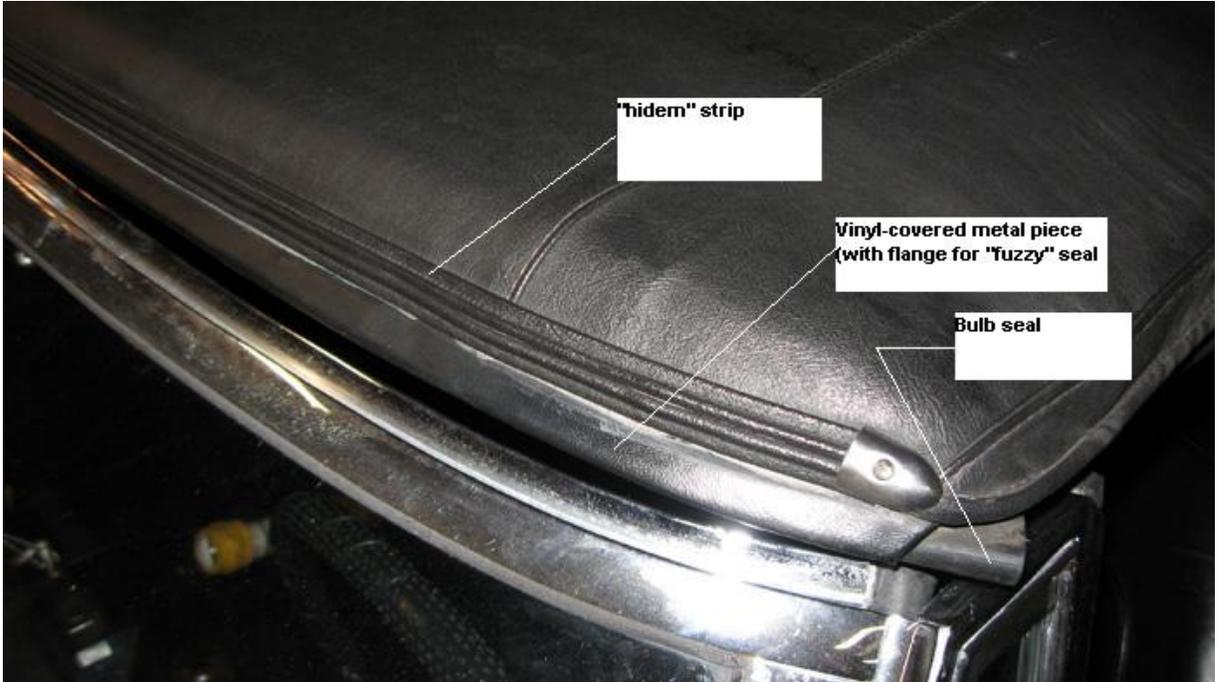
12. With the top pulled taut over the front bow, (using chalk) mark a line across the top fabric from left to right at the front edge of the bow, feeling through the fabric for the edge of the bow as you go across. With your helpers, make sure the top stays smooth and taut while you do this. You are trying to mark the edge of the bow on the top side of the fabric. Once you have this line, release the fabric and unlatch the top bow from the windshield. Fold the top frame back a bit (about 7 or 8 inches). With the frame in this position, pull the fabric across the bow again and position it in relation to the bow front edge so that another chalk line can be marked parallel to the first, but about ½-inch BEHIND it (toward the rear of the car).
13. With the second chalk line marked, re-latch the top frame to the windshield. While your helpers pull the top to align the FRONT chalk mark to the edge of the bow, get inside the car and with chalk mark the top of the bow from left to right on the bottom side of the top fabric. This will mark the maximum extent from the front edge that you will want to put glue on the fabric to attach the top to the front bow, (so the glue will not show).
14. Fold the front edge of the top back and apply contact cement to the bottom of the fabric where it will lap over the front bow, and to the mating surface of the bow. Unlatch and fold the top frame back a bit. When the cement is tacky (according to instructions), pull the top fabric forward and down over the front bow to align the REAR chalk line to the bow front edge, feeling through the fabric for the edge of the bow. Be sure the center marks stay aligned, and work from the center toward each side. The top itself will not be completely taut because the frame is folded back.
15. The top fabric will probably need to be trimmed at both sides where the bow curves to avoid bunching. Bunching is alleviated by cutting “darts” in the fabric at strategic locations (darts are V-shaped cuts in the edge of the fabric) and then butting the cut edges. The front edge of the fabric should curve all the way around and under the front edge of the bow (keeping the REAR parallel chalk mark aligned with the edge of the bow). Once the fabric is attached correctly with the contact cement to the front bow, tacks can be added through the fabric into the bottom of the wood bow for strength. Tacks can also be added through the fabric across the front bow at the location where the “hidem” strip will be installed. (Instead of tacks, I used staples from a staple gun). If all this is done correctly, when the top frame is latched into position, the extra ½” of stretch between the front and rear chalk lines should make a very smooth installation. After the top is securely and smoothly attached to the front bow, the new top to bow seal can be installed (see Seal Installation below).
16. After the front edge of the top is attached, the sides can be done. The fabric is pulled tautly to the sides (without making wrinkles elsewhere), and the flaps

folded over the wood cantrail pieces at the sides. These can be glued and tacked, or just tacked in place. After the sides are done, reinstall the metal cantrail seal flange pieces and the rollup window seals.

Seal Installation (Front bow to windshield)

NOTE: I installed my top in April 2000 before the age of the digital camera, and I did not make notes or photographs while I was doing it. After the top fabric is installed, doing the front seals is a piece of cake and you can probably figure it out easily if you pay attention to and document how things were installed as you take them apart. The following steps are provided from memory and by examining my assembly. My top has never leaked, although it was the first top I had ever installed.

1. Attach the vinyl-covered metal piece (that has the flange for the “fuzzy” seal) to the wood bow, using the previous attachment screws and holes in the bow (probe gently along the bow through the new top fabric with an awl to find the holes (to avoid future rusting of the screws, I used stainless steel screws as replacements).
2. Lay the top-to- windshield frame bulb seal in place across the windshield top frame piece and secure it temporarily with small strips of masking tape. The bulb should be forward of the windshield top frame flange and fit snugly against the flange, with the flat part of the seal toward the rear and across the top of the flange.
3. Close the top on the bulb seal (do not latch it yet) and make sure the seal remains against the flange all the way across the windshield. When the bulb seal is positioned correctly, latch the top.
4. Mark the rear edge of the flat part of the bulb seal on the vinyl-covered metal piece. This will be the reference mark for attaching the seal.
5. Unlatch and fold back the top. Using the reference mark to position the seal, attach the seal with contact cement.
6. Install the convertible top “fuzzy” seal.
7. Latch the top and install the “hidem” strip with tacks or staples. To prevent water wicking past the fasteners, I chose to seal them with silicone sealant.



FINAL RESULT (12 years later):



