

Changing a Steering Wheel

By Tim Wallace

Anyone change a steering wheel lately on a BJ8? How difficult is it, and what are the dangers of doing harm to the signal light unit when changing it?

Did this a couple of years ago. Really an easy job actually. You may want to change the wiring harness that leads to the trafficator while you are at it.

First step is to remove the trafficator and stator tube. (I am assuming you have the adjustable steering wheel like mine.) Take out the three set screws in the steering wheel first. This will allow you to pull out the trafficator. Next, disconnect the wiring harness wires. This is done behind the grille. Make sure you mark what wires go to which as the wires have different color codes at either end of the connections. Go figure!

Once you have the wires loose, then take off the retaining nut and compression fitting from the steering box. At this point you can remove the entire assembly, but wait!

You want to tie a length of string to the end of the turn signal wires, so that when you remove the entire assembly, the string will be inside the steering column. You will use this for re-assembly since it is really hard to fish the wires back down the tube. Its much easier to pull these than push them, that's where the string comes in.

Now that you have everything disconnected, pull on the trafficator. It should be free and the length of the stator tube should come out. You may want an extra pair of hands to help the wires make it through the small hole at the front of the gear box.

The next step is to remove the retaining ring from the steering column. This is what keeps the steering wheel from sliding off the splines of the steering column. Its a really pissy job as this is not a standard retaining clip, but a piece of spring steel. Push the steering wheel all the way forward, and have at it. One cussing fit and a blood blister later, its off!

Once the clip is off, just pull on the steering wheel, it should come off easily. Make a mark on the splined shaft before hand to make sure you have the right orientation of the wheel for the new installation. (i.e. mark which way is up so your new wheel isn't off center)

That's it! Assembly is the reverse! ;o)

Helpful hints:

1. Put electrical tape over the end connectors of the wires so they are all held together. When pulling them out or re-installing, the can snag. Taping them together helps.

2. Make sure you loosen the nut on the new wheel before installing. You will wonder why this doesn't want to go on if you do not.
3. Mark the splines steering column with the upward orientation of the steering wheel spoke. Use a dab of paint or something. Its really easy to get this wrong with all the splines on the shaft. Being off by a little can make you unhappy for years.
4. Put a oil pan underneath the steering box when you remove the nut. It will drain out all its contents when this is removed. The thick oil in there doesn't like to come off the garage floor.
5. Make a list of what wires go to which. Mark them as well on the car.

That's it. Hope it helps.

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