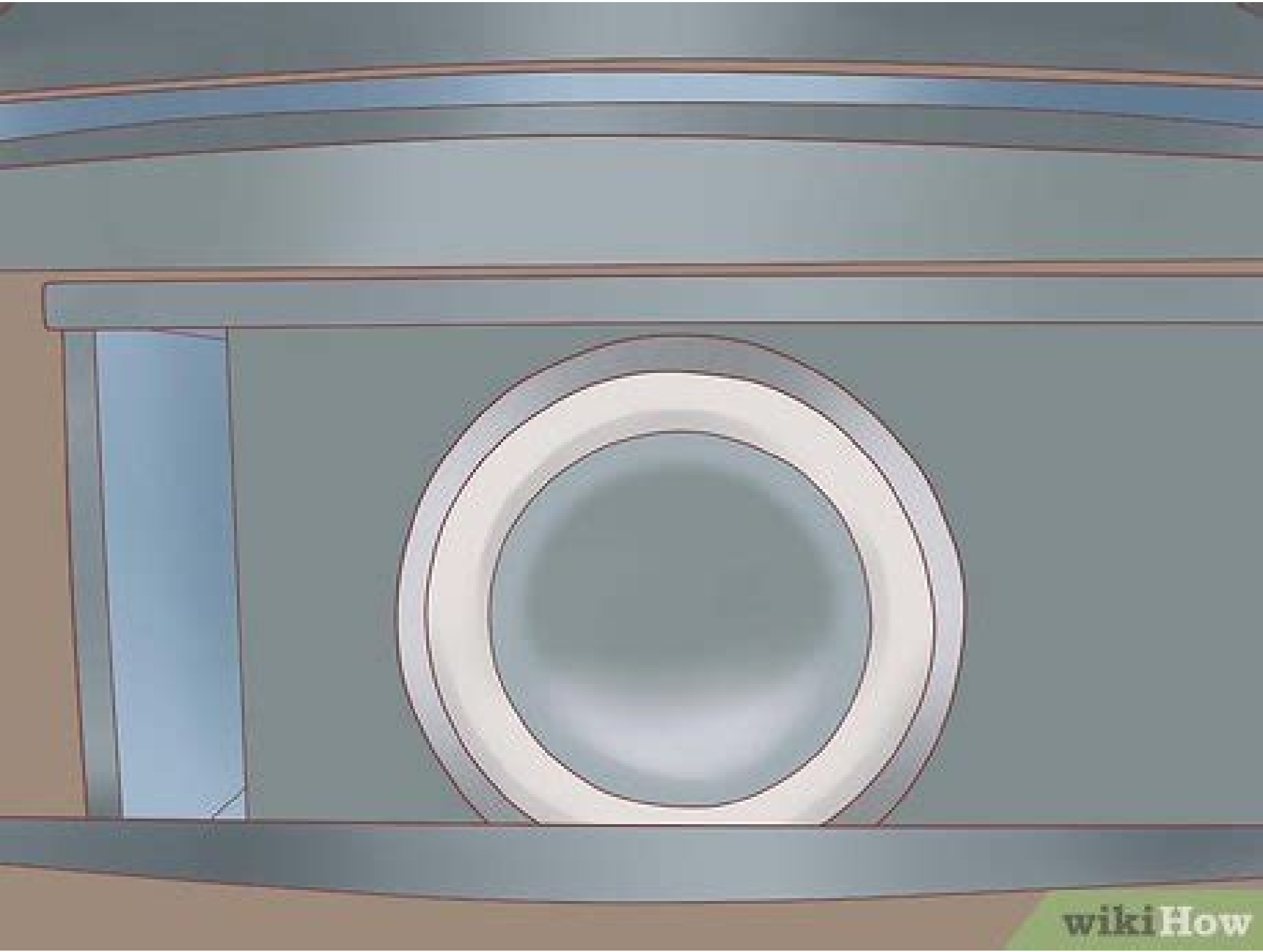
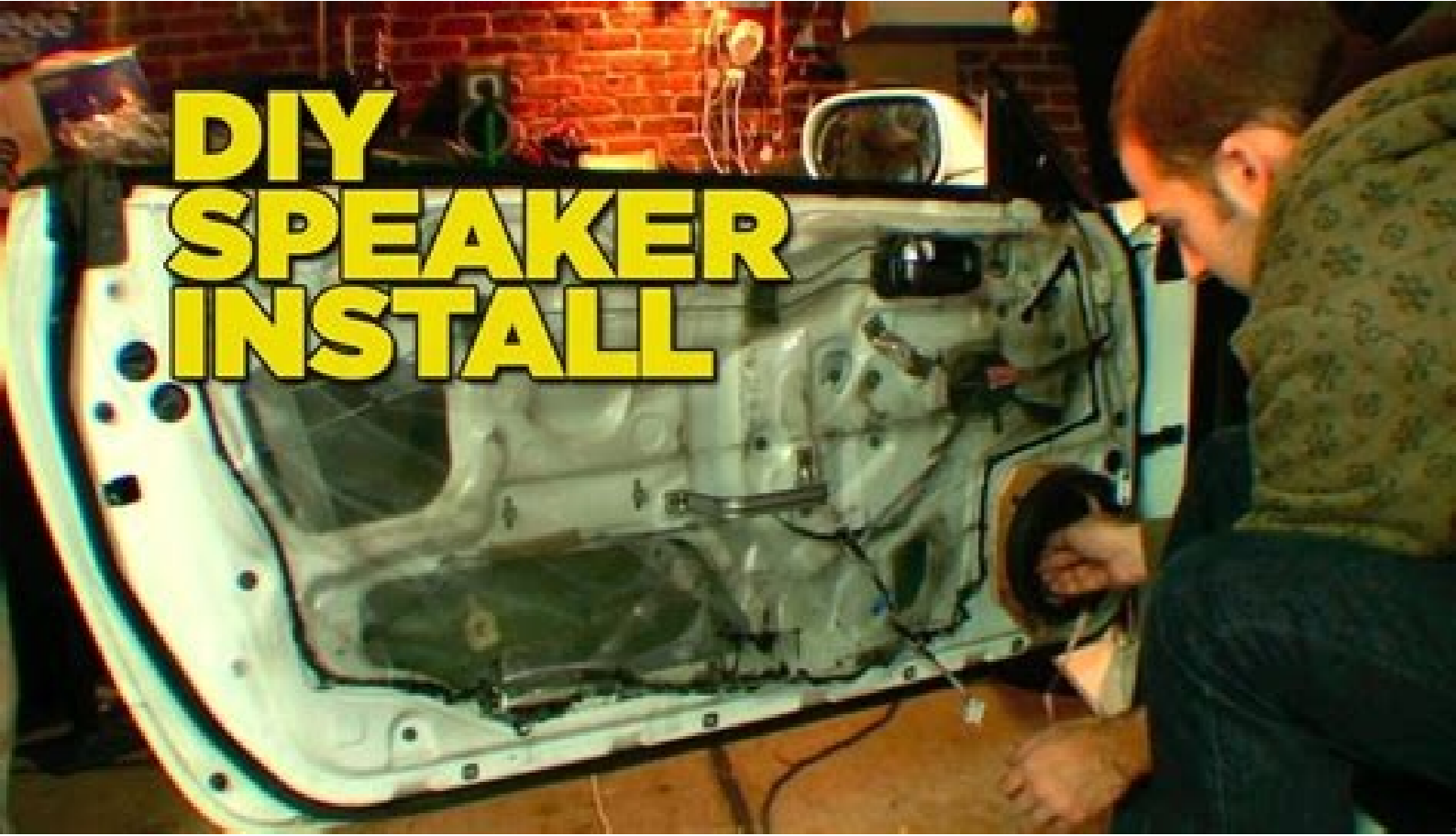


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Installing car speakers for dummies. Installing car speakers.

Some people don't care about audio quality in their vehicle, and that's fine. But for others, it is very important to enjoy amazing sound quality when driving. The vast majority of sound quality comes down to your car speakers. Your factory speakers probably aren't amazing - unless you have a really high trim of certain models, the factory speakers are designed to just be "okay." While you can have a professional service install new speakers into your vehicle, it's also something you can do yourself. One warning: this is not the easiest do-it-yourself task and requires a number of tools and a fair amount of experience to do well. Depending on the speakers, you might have to cut into the interior of your vehicle, and if this makes you nervous, then that's what professionals are for. Also, every vehicle is different, so this guide is going to offer pretty broad strokes. Always get information specific to your year, make, and model to ensure you're doing things properly. But, that being said, here's what you need to know about installing new speakers into your car. Getting Started - Budget and Overall Plan Before you start doing any kind of installation, you're going to need new car speakers to install, and it's a good idea to consider a couple of things. For starters, get a sense of your budget. There is an insane number of car speakers available from many different manufacturers in a lot of different configurations. So the options can be overwhelming. With a budget in mind, however, you can narrow down your options a bit. Also, form an overall plan for what you want your car audio to be like. You might only be able to afford a couple of speakers right now, but your plan might be to have an 8-speaker sound system with an amp and a subwoofer. Before you buy any speakers, figure out what you want to get in the end because you may be able to buy it one or two parts at a time, upgrade as you go, and have them all work well together. Without a plan, you can end up wasting time and money on units that don't work well together. So get a sense of what you want to have before you get started, then you can budget yourself and either get everything you want at once or build your dream car speaker system over time. Before you Begin I'm not going into details on choosing the right speakers, as that's a whole other topic and requires a lot of other decisions. We'll assume you've worked it out, have a plan, and got some speakers that you want to install. Before you get started, however, I strongly suggest you find a guide or installation instructions for your specific vehicle. Speaker manufacturers and other services offer these kinds of sheets that can make a huge difference in ensuring you don't damage your vehicle and get your speakers installed properly. Also, before you start doing anything else, get ready to install and make sure you have everything you need. Lay out all of your speaker parts to ensure you have everything, and get your tools together. You'll probably need a couple of different types of screwdrivers, as well as Torx drivers and bits, and Allen wrenches. Have a drill with large bits to cut holes with, a wire cutter/stripper tool, crimping tool and connectors, and a panel removal tool. You should also have electric tape, a hobby knife with a sharp blade, and some other items specific to your setup. Finally, before you do anything else, when you're going to install new car speakers, make sure your vehicle is on even ground and that your parking brake is on. Then, disconnect the negative terminal of your car battery. This will ensure you don't short circuit anything and avoid draining your battery while having your car door open and working on the installation. Remove the Old Speakers Now, before you can install new speakers, you will likely need to remove the old ones. The way you do this depends on a number of factors: the location of the speakers, the way they were installed, and how many you're replacing. You might be replacing speakers on the front dashboard, in your vehicle's doors, in the rear area behind your back seats, or some combination of all of the above. Front dashboard speakers can be pretty easy to remove, usually requiring nothing more than the removal of the grilles covering them. These are typically held in place by screws or friction fittings. A screwdriver will get the screws out, and you can use a panel tool for popping off the grille if it uses friction fittings. Then remove the old speakers, and pay attention to the polarity of the terminals connected to them. Removing door speakers takes more work, and you often need to remove the door panel to get to the factory speakers. If you have a manual window with a crank, you'll need to start by removing the hand crank - it will usually have either a screw or a spring clip holding it in place, and you'll want to use a retaining clip tool to remove it. For a power window, you'll probably need to disconnect a cable before removing the panel, though this depends on your vehicle. Once you have done that, there will probably be a few screws or retaining clips holding the panel onto the door. Remove these, and then use a trim panel tool to pry the panel off your door. This isn't particularly difficult, but be sure to take your time to avoid damaging the panel. Then you can remove the factory speaker in much the same way as the one in your dashboard; just look for screws and other connectors holding it in place. Install the New Speakers This is the tricky part, and where you'll want to make sure you absolutely know what you're doing. It's really best to have a guide for your specific make and model. You might be able to install your new speakers where the old ones were, but this depends on many different factors. If you're installing additional speakers, like replacement woofers and new tweeters, you may need to drill a large hole in the door panel for the new speakers to install into. Be sure you watch for anything in the door that can get in the way, and you'll want to plan this out before doing any cutting. It's a good idea to get baffles to install behind your speakers to avoid unwanted vibration and improve overall sound quality. Once your speakers are properly in place and installed, then do one more thing before you put it all back together. Make Sure it Works It's easy to forget about this, but you can save yourself a lot of headache by ensuring everything is connected properly before reassembling all the trim pieces on your car. Start your car (remember to reconnect your battery) and listen to your new system. Don't worry about fine-tuning settings or anything, but make sure the speakers are working properly. Then disconnect your battery again, and replace the door panels or anything else you removed during installation. If you are adding a subwoofer to your vehicle, this process can be quite simple since you'll often keep it in the rear seating area or trunk. Just remember to get a high-quality subwoofer enclosure, or have a professional make one custom for your setup. This will improve your bass sound and make for a much more enjoyable, richer listening experience. If you're new to the world of car audio systems, there's one key fact that should be aware of. It doesn't have anything to do with squeezing every last bit out of a car audio capacitor or adding an additional battery. It's not even a hot tip on where to get the lowest prices on audio gear. The most important thing to remember is that your car stereo probably doesn't sound as good as you might think it does, and that isn't a judgmental statement. The sound system is one of the places that original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) almost universally neglect in the name of higher profits. Most people don't even realize what they're missing. If a car stereo sounds OK to enough people, that's all the OEMs are looking for. Even factory-installed premium sound systems usually aren't up to snuff. So how can you tell if your factory audio needs a little tender loving care? Here's a test that anyone can do: Sit in your car and close the doors and windows. Play your favorite music and turn up the volume. Don't be afraid to go higher than you usually would, but don't go blow-out-your-eardrums high. Listen to the music. You're listening for several things, and you don't have to be an expert audiophile to pick up on them. If you need to turn up the treble due to a lack of clarity, that's something that an upgrade can fix. If you turn up the bass only to have the bass sound hollow or empty, that's also something an upgrade can fix. If the music sounds distorted when the volume is up really high, that's another thing you can take care of with a bit of tinkering. So, where do you start? There are different ways to tear into a factory sound system upgrade. Answering a handful of questions can set you on the right path: How important is your budget? Do you have much money to spend on upgrades? Do you want to improve the sound while keeping your factory stereo? Would you rather ditch the factory stereo and start fresh? How important is bass? Do you like listening to your music loud? You might be surprised at how the simple act of pondering those five questions sets you on the road to building a great car audio system. The great thing about upgrading car audio is that there's no right or wrong way to go about it, and the best thing about upgrading factory audio systems is that almost any component you replace represents at least a marginal improvement. If you're working on a tight budget, you can do some things to improve the sound. You can even replace components one at a time, as your budget permits, and eventually, you'll have a completely custom car sound system. If you are going the piecemeal, budget-conscious route, plan how you want the finished system to look. If you do that, you'll end up with components that work well together. JVC America / CC by 2.0 / Flickr One good place to start if you're budget conscious is the speakers. Factory speakers are typically anemic, so you may notice an improvement in the sound by replacing the front speakers. A decent set of front speakers might only set you back \$50. Component speakers provide even better sound, but that's a complicated upgrade that's better paired with a new car stereo. If you decide to drop in new speakers, make sure they'll work with the existing head unit. If you plan on upgrading the head unit in the future, consider that as well. Everyone has different opinions on car audio, and some people love the look of their factory stereo. If you have a late model car with an integrated infotainment system, upgrading the stereo can be difficult. In either case, there are several ways to improve a factory sound system without touching the head unit. JVC America / CC by 2.0 / Flickr The first step is to ditch the factory speakers and replace them with premium units. Premium speakers are made with high-quality materials, so they sound better and last longer than factory speakers. That alone typically results in an improvement over the factory sound. If you're ready to take things to another level, consider installing an amplifier that uses speaker-level inputs. Most amps use line-level inputs, but you'll need one with speaker-level inputs if your factory stereo lacks preamp outputs. That might sound like a lot of nonsense, but it means that the amplifier can sit between the factory head unit and your new speakers and allow you to turn up the music without any distortion. When you add one or more amplifiers, you also have the option of adding a subwoofer. That provides richer bass. Still, you can also add a digital sound processor to improve the sound from all your speakers. If you don't like your factory stereo, you may want to start with a clean slate. That's great, but the number of choices can be paralyzing. If you're building a system from the ground up, start with either the speakers or the head unit. Doug Belshaw / CC by 2.0 / Flickr Either way, you want to end up with a head unit capable of powering the speakers. You can also go with a head unit that has preamp outputs and an amplifier that's capable of fully powering the speakers. There are many options when you build a car stereo system from the ground up, so people who have never performed this task may shy away from that sort of drastic change. If you want to dive in, consider the types of features you want out of your car stereo, which helps you find the perfect head unit. Also, decide whether you're going to use full-range or component speakers. If the only thing you're missing is bass, add a subwoofer to your factory system in one of two ways: Add an amplifier and a subwoofer. Add a powered subwoofer. Jon Rawlinson / CC by 2.0 / Flickr Powered subwoofers are simpler, but adding an amplifier and a subwoofer gives you more flexibility. Either way, a subwoofer is the best way to get that bass pounding. If you want the easiest way to add more bass to your car audio system, a powered amplifier with speaker-level inputs is the way to go. These units combine an amp and a subwoofer into one unit, so there isn't any guesswork, and they can be hooked up to any factory or aftermarket head unit. If you're concerned about volume, an amplifier is still the component you need to add to your system. You'll probably need an amp with speaker-level inputs if you're leaving the factory stereo in place, but some premium factory head units come with line-level outputs. It's easy to overpower the speakers when you add a powerful amplifier to a factory sound system. With that in mind, upgrade the speakers if you want to crank up the volume all the way. Jeff Sandquist / CC by 2.0 / Flickr If you're worried about the resale value of your car or if you're leasing the vehicle, take a few steps to make sure that nothing is damaged. Pete / CC by 2.0 / Flickr The most important thing to look for is a wiring harness specifically designed for your vehicle. This harness plugs into the factory wiring, so you won't have to cut into any of the wires in your car stereo system. Some of these wiring harnesses are designed to plug into a new head unit, which means there's no wiring involved at all. This is the easiest way to install a new head unit, and it ensures that you can pop the factory stereo back in any time you want. Thanks for letting us know! Tell us why!

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