

## How to add rear seat belts to your '64-'66 Barracuda



by Neil Brommell

All photos can be clicked for a larger view

### Introduction

Recently I was faced with the birth of my first child. "You can't put the baby in your Barracuda!" people said. I knew differently. In fact, with a little advance preparation, my son was brought home from the hospital in the rear of the Barracuda. After installing rear seat belts, his new detachable base baby car seat fit in snug and tight, better than it fits into our other vehicles! (Fig.1) [And according to reports within the first few weeks of learning to ride, it was usually a fussy experience... except in the Barracuda, where the little tyke was apparently happy. You spoiled him, Neil... good work! -ed.]



My car came with front seat belts, but no rears. Where do I drill holes? What bolts should I use? What seat belts do I use? I purchased a set of 5 matching belts on Ebay. Apparently they are from a 1967 GTX. I opted to replace my front red belts, so now all 4 match. (Fig.2) You may find something different to use. Here is my experience, hopefully it will benefit you.

What's involved? You will need to acquire suitable seat belts, remove your rear seat, and measure and drill 4 holes, that's all.

### What you will need:

- A pair of seat belts. 60" long is good.
- qty 4 - 1/2" diameter x 1 1/4" long bolts, and nuts
- qty 8 - washers
- 1/2" high speed metal drill bit
- tools - ratchet, wrenches, measuring tape, drill

### What seat belts should I use?

This is the big question! You may wish to replace all your belts like I did, or you may try to find a pair that matches your existing belts. You can buy new reproduction belts, or even use old airplane seat belts (lightweight aluminum). It's your choice. Whatever you do, try to find belts with retractors for the front (preferably in plastic housings) and belts with or without retractors for the rear.



All my research suggests that the correct belts for a 1964-1966 Barracuda should have buckles and male ends that look like *Fig.3* (*Fig.3* shows front belts along with a pair of straps for holding down the rear seat). Rear belts will be the same, but the shorter male ends will have plastic sleeves instead of the plastic housings (*Fig.4*). Some cars may have retractors in the rear.

Here are photos of different seat belt sets I've seen, all of which would be suitable, but not necessarily technically correct if you're building a numbers matching show car. Some have aluminum end brackets and in my opinion are preferable. (*Fig.5, 6, 7*)

### How do I get the rear seat out?

Complete directions are beyond the scope of this article, but basically you must remove the top portion and lower portion separately. On the top portion, you will find two large bolts at the pivot location of either side. The lower portion is held with two screws (look in the crack, where you lose your change and gum wrappers) and then the front edge of the seat must be pushed down and then rearward to unhook it from the front hooks (one on each side,) at which point the front of the seat lifts up.



### Where do I drill the holes?

Not an easy thing to answer. I communicated with many people and collected many photos before drilling. Because the contours of the floor pan are all rounded, approximate measurements were the best I could collect. *Fig.8* and *Fig.9* show the floor pan and the best possible measurements, taken directly from an original Barracuda seat belt installation. Study *Fig.9* closely and measure twice before you drill! **Please see My Final Thoughts for important information about this!!**

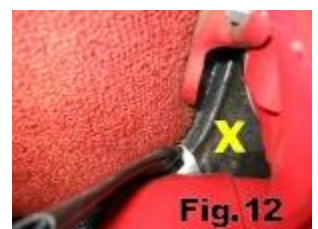


### How do I install the belts?

Again, measure a few times and make sure you're drilling in the right spot. Because the center hump is not exactly centered, be careful using this as a guide. Be sure your drivers side female belt is the same distance from outside of the car as the passenger side female belt. (*Fig.10*)



When you're ready, drill the holes. You may wish to drill a small pilot hole first. Using your washers between the sheet metal and seat belt brackets, place the bolt assembly through the holes. To hold someone who is experiencing severe G-forces, a seat belt needs to be secured to the floorpan with a thick washer on the back side for strength, to keep from ripping through the sheet metal. Please don't even \*think\* about attaching a seat belt with a couple of little tiny sheet metal screws, use the bolts. Although the factory welded nuts onto reinforcing plates on the bottom side, you can simply use nuts. Get a friend to hold the wrench on the head of the bolt inside of the car while you tighten the nuts under the car, or use a long handled socket wrench that will swing into a locking position. (*Fig.11*)



### Final Thoughts and Caveats

When I installed my own rear seat belts, I drilled the holes for the male portion of the belt exactly where I was told and according to the measurements above. When I put the lower portion of the rear seat back in, the belt was hitting the seat instead of fitting neatly through the crack between the upper and lower seat pieces. (Fig.12) To correct this without drilling another hole, I rotated the belt bracket so it points up, and now the seat belt flops over and through the crack without a problem. It does however mean the male end is upside down. Technically this does not make any difference, but visually it's not the perfect installation. If I could do it again, I would drill higher, maybe where the yellow X is in Fig.12. I would look at your seat first, identify where you want to drill, then remove your seat and drill. Try not to repeat my mistake!

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