

MOBILE TECHNICAL TRAINING UPHOLSTERY 101

Tan - Black - 1996 Lumina Rear Bench Seat

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This article was submitted by Juan Romero Jr., Full-Time Student from summer 2008. In this "How To" edition, the reader will learn the basic steps of how to re-upholster an existing factory seat. There may be many reasons a person may want to re-upholster factory seats including cosmetic, damage, stains and aesthetic reasons to match custom work.

Whatever the reason may be, these instructions will provide a general understanding of how auto upholstery skills can be applied. These instructions are written for a person with basic knowledge of sewing techniques. If you are unfamiliar with the terminology or techniques in this article try reading Automotive Upholstery Handbook by Don Taylor.

Before and after pics here... >>

BEFORE



AFTER



TOOLS REQUIRED

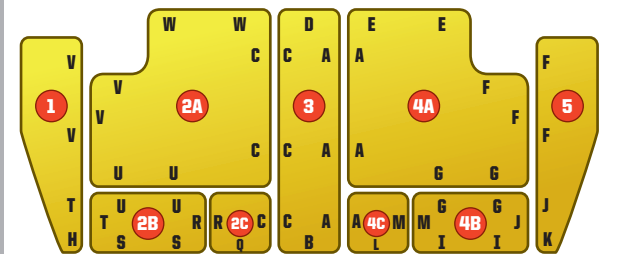
- Fabric
- Open Celled Foam
- Industrial Sewing Machine
- Thread (#69 Nylon)
- Needles
- Hog Rings
- Hog Ring Pliers
- Tack Hammer / Tacks
- Permanent Marker
- Sheers



STEP 1
Remove seats from the vehicle and place all bolts and other fasteners into a marked container. Then, using pliers cut the hog rings using generally located on the edges of the rear side of the seat. Also, unclip any plastic retaining hooks and detach Velcro anchors.

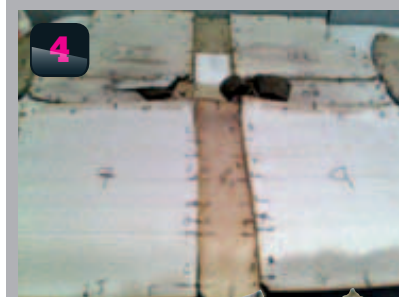


BOTTOM SEAT PORTION

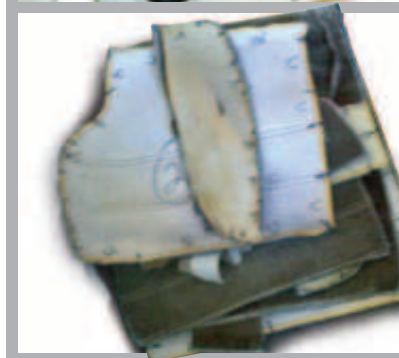


STEP 2
Using a marker label on the back of the material. Here we are simply using a simple 1-9 pattern labeling each seat portion and A-Z for labeling adjacent sides. (You can choose your own system; just make sure it is consistent and accurate. It may also help to sketch out a picture or diagram of the seat.)

STEP 3
Find you locator marks, the small notches along the seam of the seats and mark them. This step is essential for sewing in later steps. Also, mark and label any Velcro, listings and other pieces that affix the seat to the foam or frame of the seat.



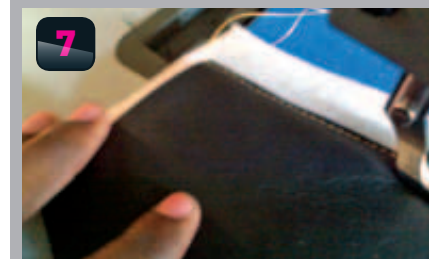
STEP 4
Carefully, pop the seams using a sharp razor, separating each portion of the seat. Also remove any listings or other anchoring materials. Then, organize the seat portions according to their relative parts and remove/store listings for later use.



STEP 5
Once all of the seat portions are separated, spread your fabric material face-down and proceed to tack down the OEM portions using a tack hammer. Be sure to close to the edge as possible within 3/8 of an inch from the edge of the material. Trace the outside edge of each seat portion, making sure to include the locator marks. Label accordingly. Using a good pair of sheers carefully cut out the fabric. Store the old seat portions in a safe place as a reference.



STEP 6
Next, using closed cell foam, cut out foam slightly larger than the new pieces that will touch the body of an occupant including the back rest, bottom seating area and bucket seat portions.



STEP 7
Using the sewing machine, sew the pieces of foam to the newly cut piece making the stitch as close as possible to the edge as possible. Any color thread will work for this because the thread will not be seen inside the seam area. Once all the pieces are foamed, be sure to label the pieces and trim access foam making sure to cut the foam at an angle so that the fabric slightly over hangs the foam.

***TIP 1**
Use the needle foot or walking foot located on the sewing machine as a point of reference when stitching to make straighter and more consistent lines. Be one with the machine.

****TIP 2**
If a piece cannot be easily identified use the locator marks from your OEM seat portions to match the unidentified piece of fabric.

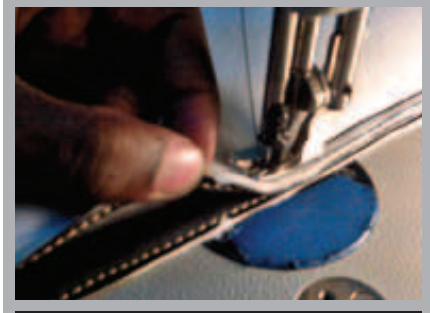


STEP 8
Lay put all of the new shapes matching all of the sides so that the sides match up as well as locator marks. Get familiar with the configuration of the seat. This will help speed up assembling the seats.

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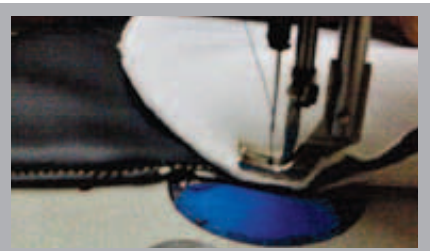
STEP 9
Locate your central piece and begin sewing the seat portions beginning with a seam with the two portions face to face matching the locator marks and labeled sides. **VERY IMPORTANT** - Be sure to lock-stitch the beginning and end of each seam.



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STEP 10
Continue to sew your seam until you have a full portion of the seat together.



*****TIP 3**
When you come to a curve in the material bend and stretch the top material as you are sewing around the corners as illustrated above. Be sure the locator marks align properly.

******TIP 4**
Make sure that as you are sewing to apply the Velcro or listings as you have labeled them.

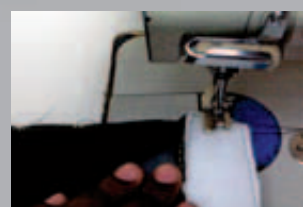
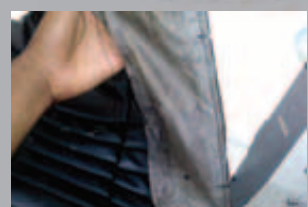


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STEP 11
In the design of my seat I introduced a French seam for the outer rim of the seat as well as down the both sides of the center insert of the seat. To do this, place your material on the table of the sewing machine face-up and fold the seams apart in the back. Place the fabric under the needle foot using either the outside of the walking foot or needle foot as your point of reference. As you are sewing, you want to keep your seam aligned with the chosen reference point.



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STEP 12
At this point your seat cover is finished and should resemble an entire seat. Now we have to add the listings and Velcro as necessary and prepare for the final install.



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STEP 13
Test fit the new seat and adjust the seat so that it fits properly. Using hog rings and a hog ring pliers, Secure the listings to the seat. Be sure to pull the material tight for a nice clean look.



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STEP 14
Install the seats and see how they look!
PAS

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