



How to Install Modern Rear Axle Seals

By Rick Botti

A while back I was faced with the task of rebuilding all four brakes on my 1929 roadster. First I completely disassembled the rear brakes and removed the old dirty backing plates as well; I'd strip and paint them later. Then I inspected the old shoes only to find them a big mess. Some were solid rust while others were covered with spider webs, yeah spider webs. All were soaked with grease that had escaped past what was left of the original felt seals. They were useless, except maybe as templates.

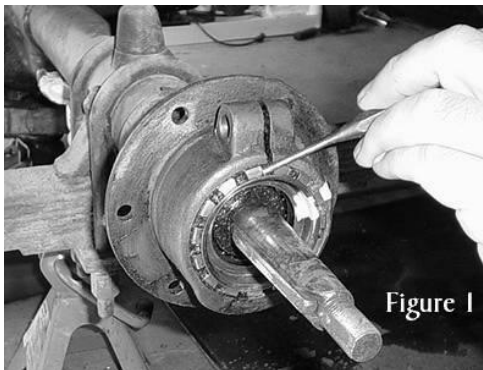


I knew that having a good brake shop reline my shoes and arch the drums would be expensive. I didn't want all that work ruined, so I to asked for help. If I were lucky enough to find a modern seal that could be used as a replacement for the old felt, I'd switch in a heartbeat. With that in mind I posted a request for advice on our website's Internet Forum, a few hours later I received a reply from Dave Schulte. He informed me about a modern seal he used that would be a perfect fit and available from my local auto parts store. The part number Dave sent me was Chicago Rawhide #17271, my parts store crossed referenced it with National #473237, I ordered two.

Step 1

First remove the top bolt and it's hardware; this will release most of the tension on the slotted ring. Then use a punch or thin chisel and lightly tap one of the open slots counterclockwise. It shouldn't be held in very tight.

Note: Remember the number of turns it takes to remove the ring, see figure 1.



Step 2

The slotted ring is really two parts. The inside cup is used to retain the felt and must be removed in order to install the modern seal, see figure 2 and 3. Tap or press around the inside metal edge. When done, you'll have two parts, one slotted retaining ring and one felt cup.

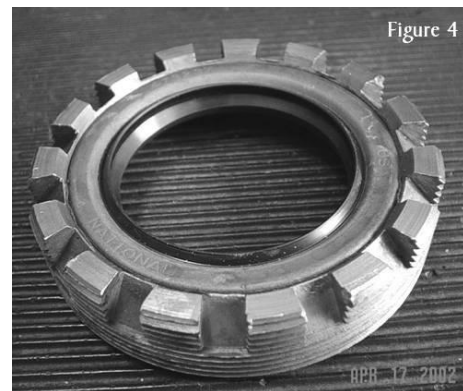


Step 3

Install your new seal by slowly tapping around the metal edge. It should press in easily if you don't get in a rush and bind the seal.

Step 4

Remember the number of turns it took to remove each ring? Screw the rings back into place counting back the number of turns. After the updated axle seals have been installed, smear a coat of grease on the part of the rear hub where the seal will run.



When you remount the brake drum, the hub will slide into the new seal snugly. This is normal and won't affect the operation of your wheels.