

Upper Wood Grain Trim Removal

By: John W

A lot of guys, including me, have been hesitant about trying to remove the wood grain trim moldings from their wagons. It's really not that hard if you have the right tools and a little patience.

The most important tool is a panel remover tool (PRT). If you don't have one, spend the money to get one. They're not expensive, and you'll need one if you ever want to remove your door panels. A PRT looks like this:



You'll also need:

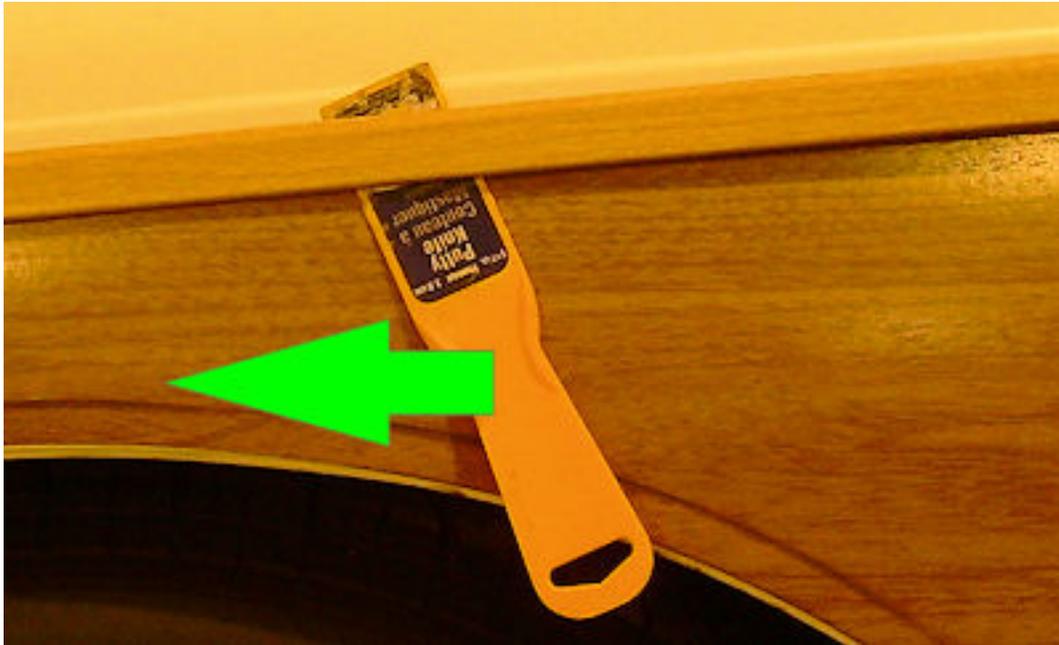
Phillips screwdriver
Punch or small block of wood
Hammer
Plastic putty knife
Masking tape

I just put compact fluorescent lighting in my garage, and it wreaked havoc on my pictures. I didn't know they were so orange until I downloaded them to my computer, so sorry about that. I'll start at the front of the car and work my way to the rear. The first thing to do is remove the wheel well molding. Do this by removing the screws that hold it on.

I put all my hardware from each panel into a baggie and labeled it. That way, you know exactly what goes where when it comes time to reinstall the moldings.



All the moldings are held on by clips. With the PRT and a little pressure, you'll be able to pop the moldings loose. So here we go. The first molding to come off is the molding that runs along the top of the fender. To find the clips, insert the plastic putty knife between the molding and the sheet metal, and then move it in any direction until you run into resistance. When you run into resistance, you are close to one of the clips.



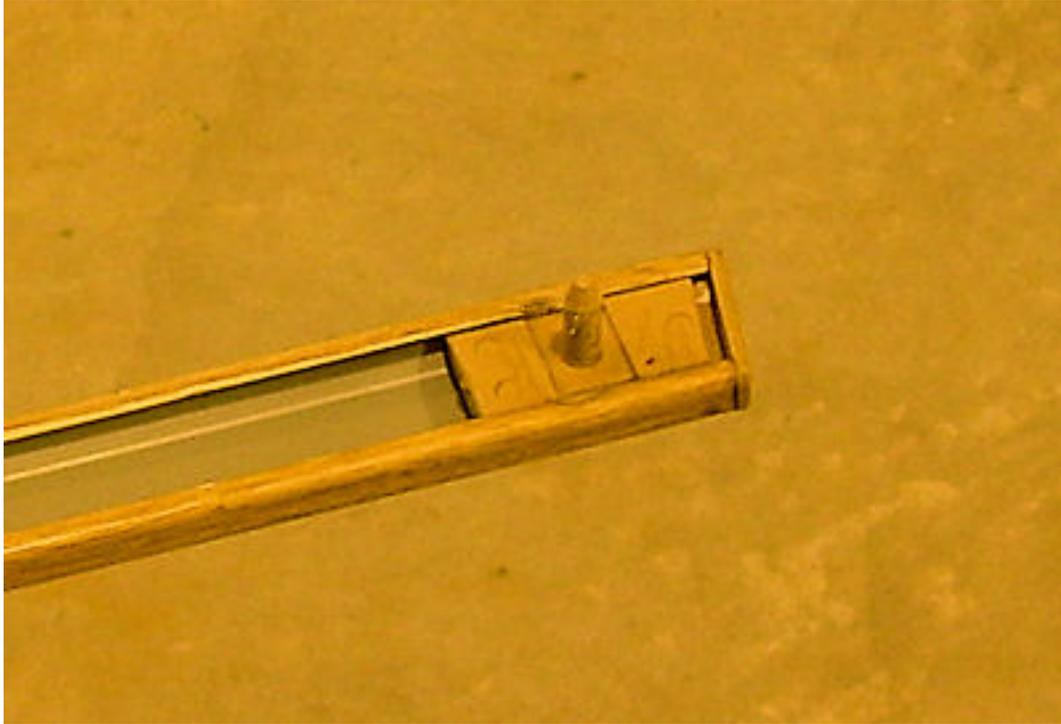
Slide the PRT in between the putty knife and the molding and GENTLY pry up on the molding until the molding pops loose from the retaining clip. The putty knife will help protect the sheet metal from getting dented by the PRT, but only if you're gentle. Keep your eye on the sheet metal while you're prying up with the PRT. If you see any sign of the sheet metal flexing inward, back off and try a different location on the molding. If you're not going to be replacing the wood grain vinyl itself, put some masking tape on the vinyl to protect it from being scratched. Because of the lighting, the tape looks like duct tape in the photo, but don't use duct tape. I used blue painter's masking tape.



Once you get a couple of the clips popped loose, the molding will want to flop around a little bit. Use some masking tape to keep it in place until you get all the clips loose.



You'll find that the end clips tend to stay on the moldings and the other clips will stay with the body.



Once you have a molding off the car, label the back of it as to what panel it came off of. I used a Sharpie for this.



Now on to that big molding at the front of the fender that connects the upper fender molding to the wheel well molding. It has a large clip at the front that is different from any other clips used on the moldings. It can be a little stubborn, so it comes off last. On my car, I just gently pulled on the molding, using a hand at the top behind the clip and one at the bottom under the clip, and pulled towards the front of the car. It came loose with a loud bang that scared the hell out of me, but no harm was done. On one side, the clip came off with the molding, on the other side it stayed on the car. This is one clip that is easy to break, and one of mine did break. I may have to use some double-sided tape to fasten the clip back to the car when I reinstall that molding.

*Edit by brokecello

On the front spear section described above, I take the battery out and the airbox out (you can also remove the horns for better access) so I can tap out the studs that hold the trim in.



Next up is the front door. You will probably have a screw or a nut that holds the rear of the molding to the door. This screw or nut will be visible once you open the door and look at the area on the inside of the door where the molding ends. If there is a nut or screw, remove it first. Other side, the molding comes off the same way as the one on the fender.

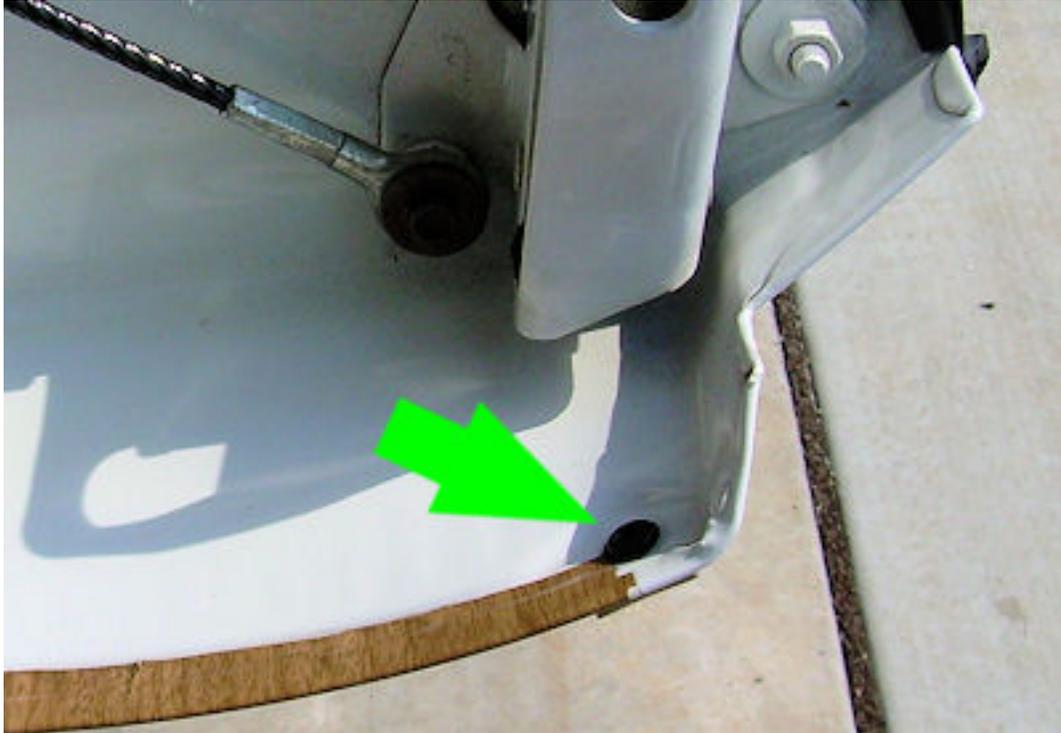
The rear door has 2 screws holding the molding in place, one at each end.



It also comes off the same way as the front fender molding once the screws are removed.

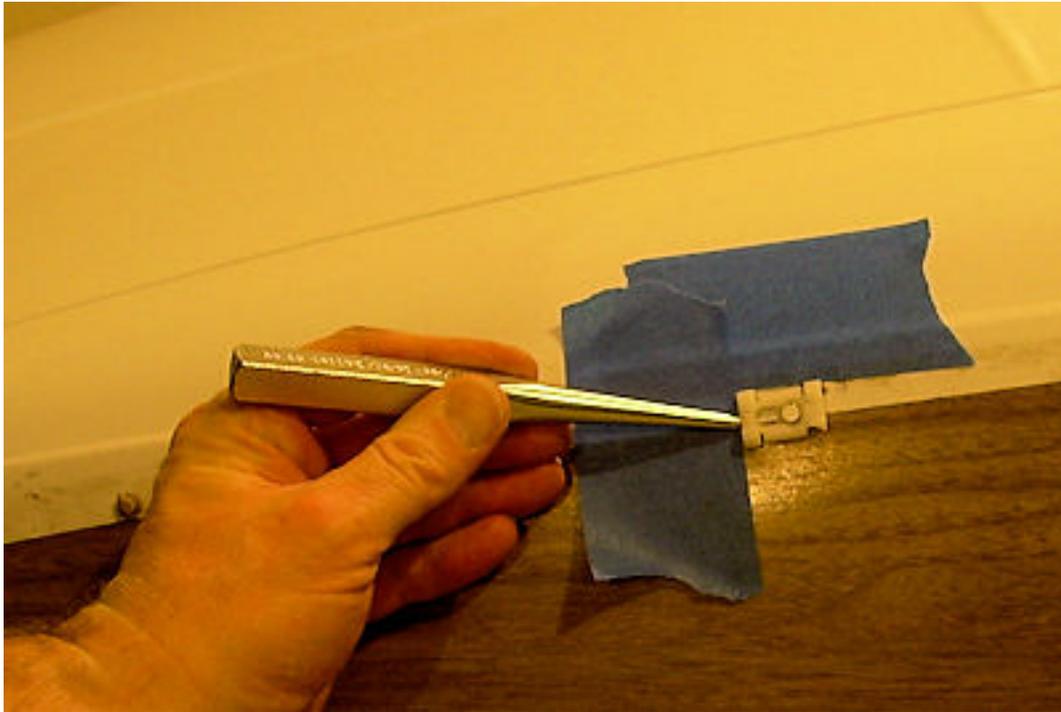
The quarter panel molding is a long one, and you'll want to use plenty of masking tape to hold it in place during removal. You don't want it flopping around and scratching your paint.

Like the rear door, the tailgate has a screw at each end of the molding.



Otherwise, it comes off the same way as the rest.

Now that all the moldings are removed, you'll see some white clips that stayed with the car. In some cases, you may be able to slide them forwards or backwards and they'll come right off. In most cases, you'll probably find that after 15+ years of being in place, they might be a little stubborn. To remove them, put some masking tape directly above them, below them, and in front of them. This is to help protect the paint in case you slip. I didn't put tape below mine since I am replacing my wood grain anyway. Then determine which way they need to slide to come off, to the front or rear. Most of mine had to slide to the rear. Take a punch, preferably brass although I didn't have a brass punch and a metal one worked out fine. A small block of wood would also work. Gently tap the clip in the direction it needs to go, and it will probably just fall right off.



On my car, the rear-most mounting studs were doubled up, but only one clip was used. It was this way on both sides.



That's all there is to it. It's not hard to do, just take your time and be patient.