

Rivet Replacement Kit

Rivet replacement is a normal and occasional maintenance task when you own an Airstream. Given that there are thousands of rivets fastening together the average Airstream, and they are constantly subjected to bumpy and uneven roads, steep grades, and weather, a few of them are bound to break once in a while.

The good news is that most rivet replacements are quick and simple with the right type of rivets and a good quality rivet tool.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THIS KIT

Marson SP-2 rivet tool. This high-quality tool has a swivel head for repairing rivets in tight places, and three bits for repairing various types of rivets.

Three types of rivets:

Small. *This is the rivet that you'll use the most.* Small rivets primarily fasten together the interior aluminum panels of your Airstream, and are the most common rivets that fall out. You'll know a rivet is broken because it will either be obviously loose, missing, or you'll see a little circle of black around the head of the rivet. (The black is aluminum oxide, caused by the loose rivet head rubbing against the aluminum panel.)

Medium. *You'll use this rivet occasionally.* Medium-sized rivets are used in a few places around the Airstream—for example, on the lid of the propane tank cover. They can also be used to replace a small rivet if the hole for that rivet has become enlarged due to it being replaced a few times.

Large (Button Head). *This size is used in the belly pan,* for rivets that have corroded and fallen out. If you notice part of the belly pan of the Airstream hanging down, or if you notice a rivet that has come loose due to corrosion and is at risk of falling out, the large size rivet is ideal to replace it. Note that you'll need to slightly enlarge the existing hole with one of the drill bits included in this kit.

Three types of drill bits:

- #30 drill bit for rivets found on the interior of an Airstream
- #20 drill bit for other rivets found on exterior items
- #11 drill bit for large “button head” rivets used for belly pan repairs

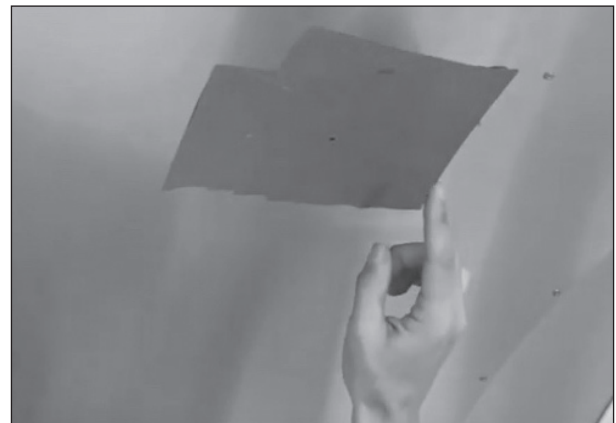
HOW TO REPLACE A RIVET

BEFORE YOU START: Make sure the entire rivet has exited the hole.

If it hasn't, pull out the head with your fingers or loosen it with a screwdriver. If it won't come out of the hole, remove it in one of two other ways:

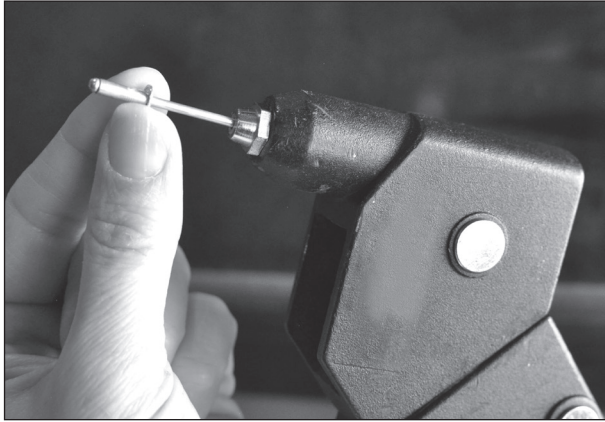
- *Drill it out with the #30 drill bit included in this kit.* Drill straight into the center of the rivet head.
- *Chop off the head with a metal paint scraper or thin screwdriver.* Generally chopping off the head is easy: just slide the paint scraper under the head from the side, and tap it with a hammer. The head will be sliced off and the tail will fall inside the wall, never to be seen again, and you'll be left with a nice empty hole for the new rivet.

1. Prep the area around the hole with masking or blue painter's tape. This will protect the area from getting dented, should the rivet tool “kick” when you replace the rivet. We highly recommend this step.



2. Using a rivet tool, choose the correct size nosepiece for a rivet. If the “mandrel” of the rivet (the thinner, longer end) doesn't fit into the nosepiece, you may have to unscrew the nosepiece with the special wrench that came with the tool, and select a different size. (Most rivet tools come with multiple sizes of nosepieces, for varying rivet sizes.)

3. Insert the rivet's mandrel into the nosepiece of the rivet tool as shown.



4. Insert the small end of the rivet into the hole on the interior wall, as shown. Hold the rivet tool firmly against the surface of the Airstream while squeezing the rivet tool handle three or four times.



NOTE: You must hold the rivet tool firmly against the wall while simultaneously squeezing the handle of the tool. Each pump of the rivet tool will become tighter each time. Don't let the rivet slide out while you are squeezing. (This takes a bit of practice, but you'll get the hang of it quickly.)

5. When you hear a "pop!" or snap sound, the rivet has been successfully installed, as shown.



Pull the tool away and admire your handiwork. The rivet will have an empty hole in the center where the stem used to be, and you'll find that broken-off stem in the rivet tool. Just shake the stem out and you're ready to install another rivet.

6. When you've replaced all rivets, remove the blue painter's tape from the area.

TROUBLESHOOTING

JAMS - If the rivet tool jams in such a way that you can't get the mandrel out after installing a rivet, don't worry. This happens occasionally with all rivet guns. First try wiggling out the mandrel with long-nosed pliers. Work the handle a little to make sure it is fully open.

If it's really stubborn you may have to disassemble the tool, and this can be tricky the first time because of the little parts inside, but it can be done and does not mean the tool is broken or bad. Cleaning the interior parts with a little silicone spray can help prevent future jams, too.