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Check Your Manual Shifter Boots!

I have read where if it has been 2 years or more since you replaced the rubber shifter boots on your manual transmission, it is time to take a look at them. There is the top leather/vinyl boot you look at every day, but this is just for appearance. Underneath are 2 important rubber boots which protect you and the transmission. The bottom small one keeps dirt out of the tranny, and the larger one on top of it keeps engine fumes from getting into the passenger compartment. These dry out from age, and from the flexing while you shift. This article is more about what to do, rather than a total "how to". You can visit the "Miata.net" Garage section for more detail, or see me and I will be glad to help you do the check.



First you must unscrew the shifter knob. It is probably tight, but just turn it to the left and it will come off. Then remove the console. There will be screws hidden in the storage box section, under the cup holders, and even under the (NB) electric window switches.

The first boot you will see is the large top boot. (See the attached large boot picture). This is held in place by 4 bolts. This just slides up off the shifter. If it is dried out and or cracked, for your safety it needs to be replaced. A little Vaseline applied to the shifter makes it easier to slide on and off.

Under the large boot is the small one (See picture of the small boot). This keeps dirt and moisture out of the tranny. Note the 1989 to 2005 Miata (NA & NB) has this small boot. The 2006 (NC) and newer does not. If it is cracked, remove the 3 bolts and take the small boot off. You may have to cut it off of the shifter shaft as it is a tight fit.



The easiest way to remove the small boot is to put the tranny in neutral and just pull the shifter straight up and out of the tranny. Before you pull the shaft up out of the tranny,



put a mark on it facing you so you put it back in the same way. You should see a small plastic "cup" type bushing on the bottom end of the shifter. (See attached picture of plastic bushing) If you have a 1989 to 2005, 5 speed tranny, now would be a good time to suction the lube out of the top turret section and put new oil in. (1989 to 2005 6-speed

tranny shifter turret does not have a separate oil section).

The only way I have found to install a new bottom boot on the shifter is to put Vaseline on the shifter and push the small boot down over the shaft. It should be positioned just under the large, widest section. You may look at the small hole in the small boot and say "No Way", but it will go down over the shaft. The Vaseline helps a lot.

If you replace the boots, put a liberal coating of Baby Powder on the OUTSIDE of the small boot, and the INSIDE of the large boot. This keeps the gummy rubber of the 2 new boots from snagging against each other and tearing them while still new.

Now install the center console, the shifter knob, and you are ready for action. Feel free to ask me if you have any questions.