

Installation of a Removable Rear Window in the 1973-1977 Corvette

1.0 Introduction. Corvette coupes from 1968 to 1972 featured an aluminum-framed rear window that could be removed and stored in a hinged tray in the rear luggage space. Combined with the removable roof panels (T-Tops), this gave the Corvette coupe a near convertible-like targa roof. In 1973, this feature was eliminated. Zora Arkus-Duntov stated that removal of the rear window created too much interior air buffeting and that this, not cost savings, was the reason for a fixed window in 1973.¹ Many owners of 1973 to 1977 Corvette coupes want to add this desirable feature.

1.1 Parts Required. Begin the installation of the Removable Rear Window by procuring the hardware listed in *Table 1 - Parts and Materials Required*. This table lists the required hardware and materials, along with suggested supplier part numbers and approximate cost.

Qty	Description	Supplier Code	Part Number	Unit Price	Total Price
1	68-72 Rear Glass, Coupe, Tinted	Z	GL-304	\$219.00	\$219.00
1	1968-1972 Rear Window Frame Removable Aluminum NOS	P	2038	\$250.00	\$250.00
2	1968-1972 Removable Rear Window Wedge	P	1588	\$12.00	\$24.00
1	68-72 Removable Rear Window Weatherstrip	Z	WS-634	\$32.00	\$32.00
2	Rear Window Locating Wedge Plate	P	8195	\$5.00	\$10.00
1	68-72 Rear window weatherstrip screws	Z	ZWS-786	\$2.00	\$2.00
2	Coupe Rear Window Guide	P	6624	\$11.00	\$22.00
4	U-Nuts	L			
4	Stainless Steel Screws	L			
2	Removable Rear Window Lock	P	4949	\$30.00	\$60.00
2	Rear Window Latch Bezel, Reconditioned	Z	U-267	\$10.00	\$10.00
4	U-Nuts	L			
4	Bolts	L			
2	69-72 Rear Roof Panels	Z	I-955	\$79.00	\$79.00
1	Permatex Black Super Weatherstrip Adhesive	X	81850		
1	3M Adhesive, Tar, and Wax Remover	M	03618		

Table 1 - Parts and Materials Required

¹ *Corvette Black Book 1953-2002*, Mike Antonik

1.2 Suggested Sources. Suggested sources are listed in *Table 2 - List of Suppliers*. Inclusion of a specific supplier does not imply any endorsement of their company or recommendation of the suitability of their product.

Supplier	Web Site	Supplier Code
Zip Products	http://www.zip-corvette.com	Z
Paragon Reproductions	http://www.corvette-paragon.com	P
Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse	http://www.lowes.com	L
Permatex	http://www.permatex.com	X
3M	http://www.3m.com	M

Table 2 - List of Suppliers

1.2 Sources of Materials. Please note that Table 1 is the author's best attempt at locating sources for long obsolete, nearly 30 year old parts. The Rear Window Latch Bezels (Figure 1), although listed in Zip Products current catalog, are currently not available. The installation can be accomplished without them and only close inspection will reveal their absence. The complete rear window assembly (Figure 2), including aluminum frame, glass and wedges, can often be located (at considerable savings) on eBay (<http://www.ebay.com>) or at any number of local or national swap meets. If you purchase a used rear window assembly, ensure that the Wedges are not broken and that the glass has not been replaced by Plexiglas or excessively scratched. Minor surface scratches on the aluminum frame can be polished with steel wool. The weatherstrip adhesive (Figure 3) and adhesive remover (Figure 4) can be locally procured at any automotive-related retailer.

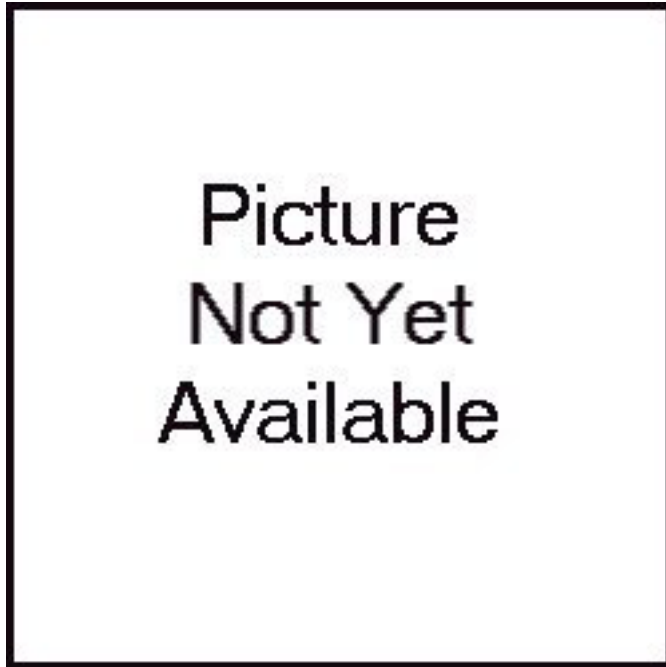


Figure 1 - Removable Rear Window Latch Bezel



Figure 2 - Removable Rear Window Assembly



Figure 3 - Weatherstrip Adhesive



Figure 4 - Adhesive Remover

2.0 Removal of Existing Rear Window

2.1 Rear Window Trim. Loosen the two screws holding the rear window lower trim (Figure 5) and remove the trim. Loosen the screws holding the rear window surround trim and remove the surround trim. Set the rear window lower trim piece and screws aside since you'll be reinstalling them later. The rear window surround trim and screws will not be reused.

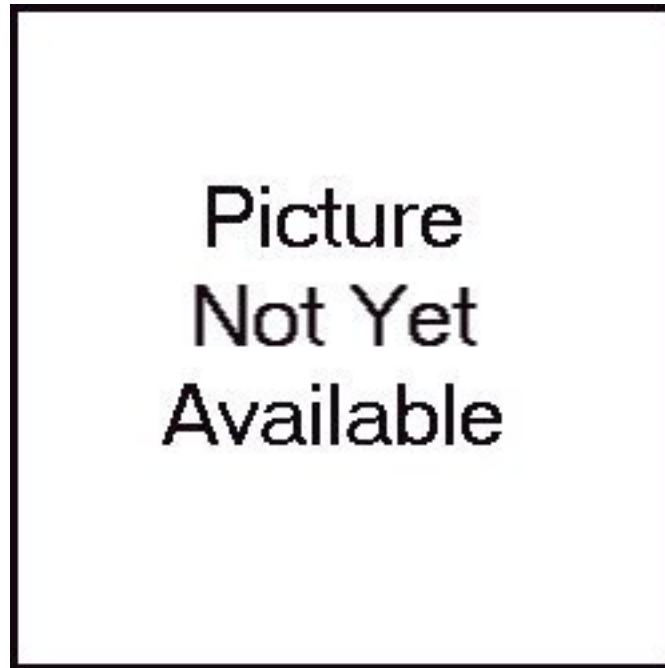


Figure 5 - Rear Window Lower Trim

2.2 Rear Roof Panels. Remove the T-Tops from the car and loosen the four screws holding each existing rear roof panel (Figure 6). Remove the roof panels and store them in a safe place. The rear roof panels will not be reused.

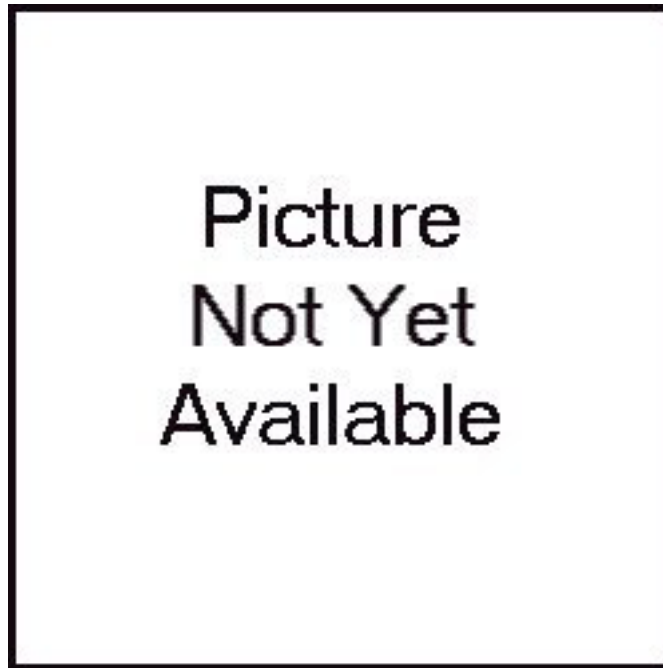


Figure 6 - Rear Roof Panel

2.3 Rear Window Glass. The existing, fixed rear window can be removed by any of several methods. The author used a utility knife with a long, flexible blade to cut the seal between the window glass and the body (Figure 7). A special tool is available to cut the seal - a utility knife with a handle attached that provides better leverage and control (Figure 8). Alternatively, you can take your Corvette to the local glass installer and have them cut the window out for you. Be extremely careful not to damage the edge of the glass or the body while cutting out the seal. Clean the remaining seal material from the glass and store the window in a safe place. The glass will not be reused.

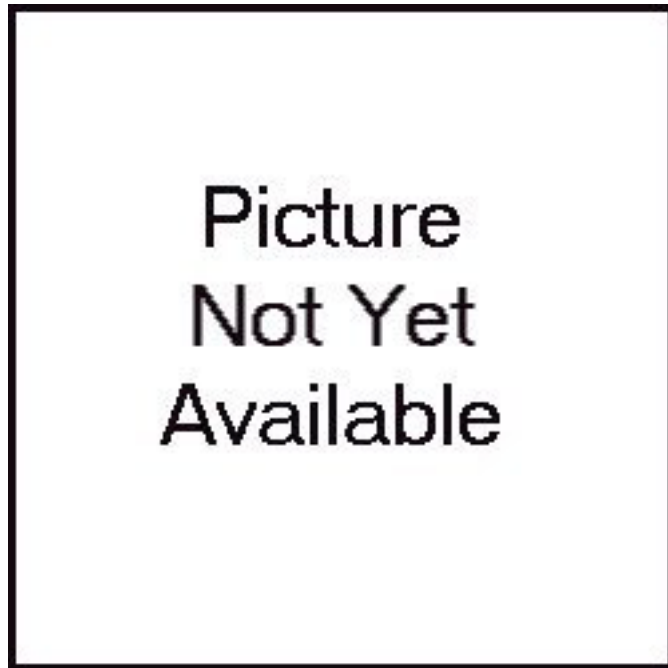


Figure 7 - Cutting the Rear Window Seal

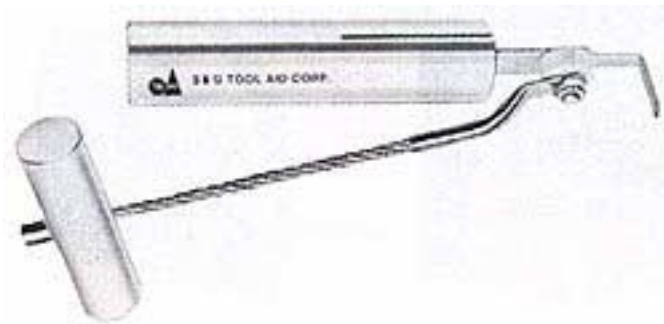


Figure 8 - Windshield Removal Tool

2.4 Water Channel. Clean any debris from the water drain channel (Figure 9) at the lower rear window mounting surface. Ensure that the drain holes (Figure 10) at the edges are clear and the drain tubes for the rear deck vents are not clogged or damaged.

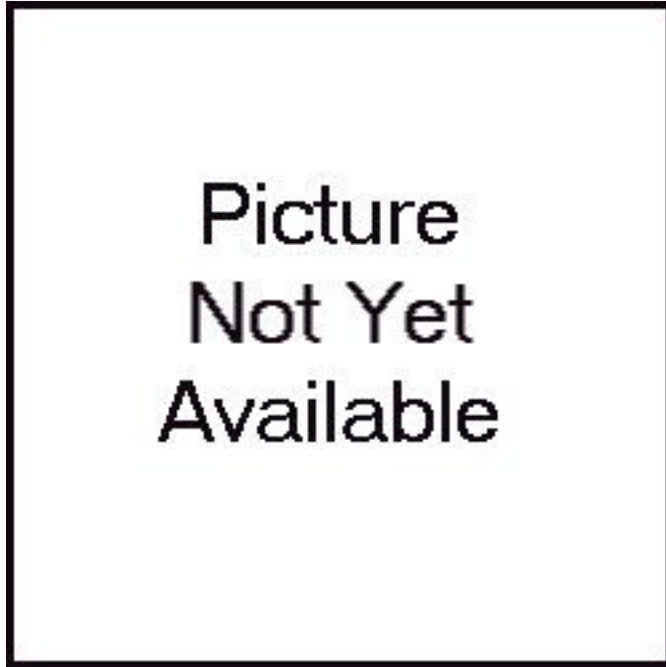


Figure 9 - Water Drain Channel

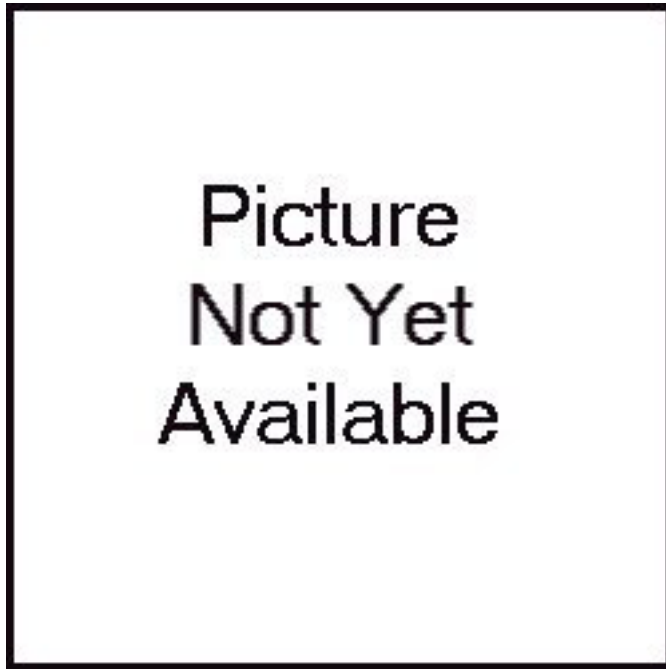


Figure 10 - Drain Holes

3.0 Area Preparation.

3.1 Clean the Weatherstrip and Mounting Surface. Thoroughly clean the area where the new weatherstrip will be adhered. Scrape the remaining seal material from the body using a wooden or plastic tool - the author used wooden tongue depressors with the ends squared off. Finish cleaning the area with the 3M Adhesive, Tar, and Wax Remover. Be careful around the paint finish. Remove any powdery mold release agent from the new weatherstrip using fine sandpaper.

4.0 Installation. Installation of the removable rear window consists of adhering the new weatherstrip and installing the locating wedge plates and locks.

4.1 Weatherstrip. This can be the most difficult part of the installation, but the following method worked well for the author. Determine the center of the bottom of the window opening and the bottom of the weatherstrip (mark with tape). Apply a thin, even coat of weatherstrip adhesive to the bonding surface of the weatherstrip and the body, again using a plastic or wooden tool. Allow to dry. Apply a second thin coat of adhesive to the bottom center section of the weatherstrip (approximately 12 inches either side of center). Working from the center of the bottom of the window opening, line up the weatherstrip, fitting the top of the weatherstrip flush with the body surface (Figure 11). Press the weatherstrip to the body, continuing to apply a thin coat of adhesive to small sections. Work slowly. After the weatherstrip is in place around the opening, apply a thin coat of adhesive to the "tabs" (Figure 12) on the sides and the corresponding body location. Let dry, then apply a second thin coat of adhesive to the "tabs" and attach them to the body.

CAUTION

Dry fit the weatherstrip to check the size. Since the Corvette was essentially hand-built, dimensions can vary and the weatherstrip can be considerably oversize. The author was required to cut the weatherstrip and remove about two inches from the top center. When installed, a small amount of adhesive will hold the ends together. Splicing at the top or sides of the weatherstrip will minimize the chance of leaks. Use extreme care when aligning the weatherstrip to the body - once contact is made the weatherstrip adheres immediately. If it is necessary to remove the weatherstrip, use the adhesive remover to dissolve the adhesive and thoroughly clean the area.

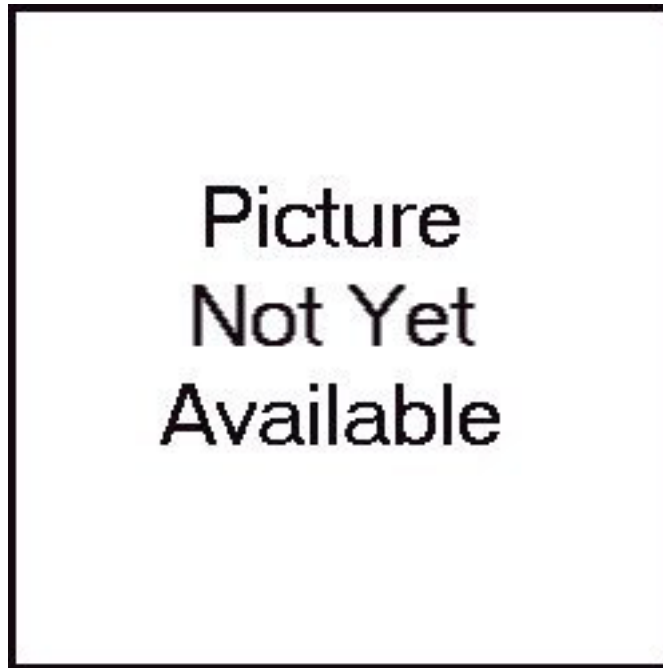


Figure 11 - Aligning the Weatherstrip to the Body

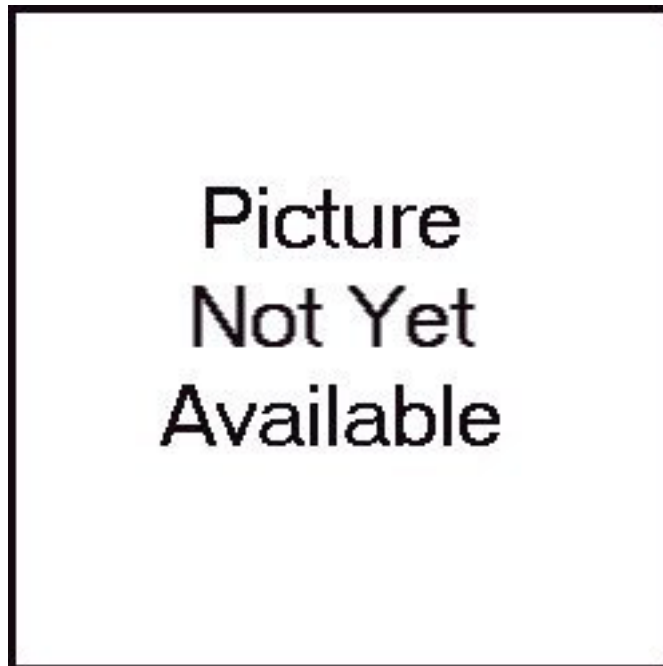


Figure 12 - Adhering the Weatherstrip Tabs

4.2 Retaining Plates. The holes for the rear window pins should already be in the body, but the holes for the plate retaining screws may or may not be there. Using the retaining plates

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(Figure 13) as a guide, mark the holes and carefully drill them, being sure to size them to allow the U-Nuts to snap into place. Loosely install the nylon guides (Figure 14), followed by the retaining plates and screws - they'll be adjusted in paragraph 5.1.

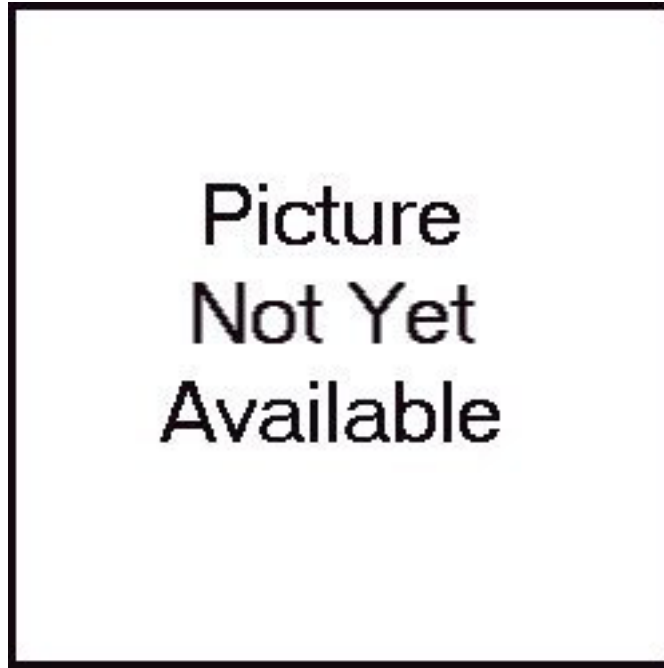


Figure 13 - Retaining Plates



Figure 14 - Rear Window Guide

4.3 Locks. Follow the same process to install the locks, using bolts instead of screws. Again, the mounting "ears" should already be there, the holes may or may not be. Using the locks (Figure 15) as a guide, mark and carefully drill holes, sizing them to allow the U-Nuts to snap into place. Loosely bolt in the locks - they'll be adjusted in paragraph 5.2.



Figure 15 - Rear Window Lock

5.0 Adjustment. Proper adjustment of the removable rear window will ensure a wind and water tight seal.

5.1 Guides. Install the window into the opening, fitting the guide wedges into the nylon guides at the lower edge of the window opening. The guide plates should slide around enough to allow the window to fit. Swing the window closed, then carefully remove it and tighten the retaining plate screws. Repeat this process until the window slides into the retainers and swings into the closed position without binding.

5.2 Locks. Swing the window into the fully closed position and attempt to close the locks. With the new weatherstrip, the fit will be quite tight. Adjust the locks fore and aft until they are somewhat difficult (but not impossible) to close. This will ensure a tight seal after the weatherstrip has compressed.

5.3 Weatherstrip. Examine the perimeter of the window and ensure that the weatherstrip has not been squeezed out of position. Clean any residual weatherstrip adhesive using the adhesive remover and a cotton swab.

6.0 Summary. The installation of the removable rear window is now complete. Leave the rear window latched in place for 24 hours to ensure the adhesive is completely dry. This will also allow the weatherstrip to compress. Procurement and installation of the Removable Rear Window Tray will be covered in a separate document.