

Installing Early Karmann Ghia Chrome Window “C-Trim”.

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Background Data:

When I say 1966 I refer to the so called 1966 ½ model year starting with #146 530702.

Trim types:

Before 1966 a so called “C shape” chrome trim was used by the factory. After 1966 an aluminum “T shape” trim was used. The T trim was much easier to deal with than the C type. This probably led to the aftermarket “cal look” rubber molding which has no trim (and no trim hassle!). If you are not picky and not dedicated, the “cal look” molding should be considered. Also consider T trim.

Note that no new C trim is available (another good reason not to go with C trim). But good used stuff is out there. I got 4 nice used ½ trim pieces from House of Ghia in pretty good shape. I initially got 2 clips that join the half’s from KGRP and then begged House of Ghia for 2 more after I was successful with the windshield. The clips are the same for front and back.

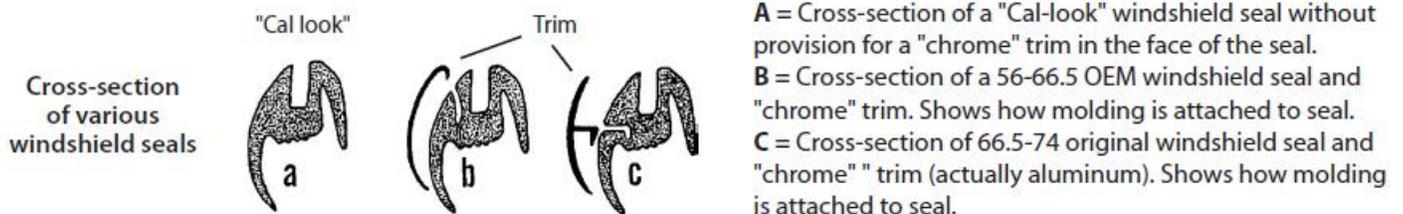
Windows:

All Ghia’s have the same size window openings. When they went to the T trim in 1966 they shortened the windshield glass height from 17.25” to 17. Curiously they did not change the rear window size. You may be able to get the exact 17 or 17.25 windshield glass from a Ghia specialty house but right now the auto glass industry has settled on a compromise 17.125” (17 1/8”) standard size. This is what I used.

There are lots of videos and info on how to install the window. My tutorial here is on the trim. So go search for yourself regarding window installation on youtube.com. My windows were put in with soapy water and a ¼” rope.

Rubber Molding:

Besides the C shape, T shape and Cal-look flavors, you can also choose between so called extruded molding (cheaper) or the better “blocked” molding. The German blocked molding definitely has a shape i.e. 4 corners: good when dealing with trim. The cheaper stuff is basically round and you form it into shape when you install. If this is your first.....or even second windshield or rear window install, you definitely want to pay more for good molding.



WARNING WARNING WARNING: EYE DAMAGE POSSIBLE: The coating on rubber parts can really irritate the eyes. I even went to the doctor for this before I realized what was happening. So do NOT ever touch your fingers to your face while working the molding. I started wearing a sweat band and had a box of Kleenex handy when I wanted to dry my face or scratch my nose.

Various Possible Ways of Installing C trim:

There are 3 possible ways of installing C molding. On the internet I have read people advocating all 3.

1)
Put the trim on the molding, put the molding on the window, install the molding and trim into car as one. I and several amateurs tried this: No good, no way, no how. The trim can't stay put in the flexible unmounted molding. Maybe if you have perfect parts and the patience of a saint. I sure didn't.

2)
Put the molding on the window. Put the trim on the window+molding. Then install in car. I have seen this vaguely documented. It must be possible. But both amateurs and professionals could not make it happen for me. The professional I used was a mobile glass service veteran professional who specialized in "classic car windows". He tried for 2 hours to get the trim + molding onto 1 window prior to install and utterly failed. Its just too difficult to get the trim to stay put.

3)
The way it happened for me and what I demonstrate in this document: install molding onto window, install window into car and then coax the trim into the molding. And in fact, this is the way KGPR (karmannghia.com) advises. When my mobile pro installer utterly failed in No. 2 above, it did not surprise me. I just instructed him to just install the window + molding into the car which he did with speed and dexterity... perfectly. Like 10 minutes per window. Thus I was "just" left with the trim install. Interested? Read on.

Get yourself the following tools and supplies for installing trim:

- 16 or 18 gauge multi-strand (not solid) wire with the insulation on it
- Some "safe prying tools" to work the rubber molding with. I found that epoxy mixing sticks by West System (#804) worked really great. See pix. You can really lean into them without cutting or marring the rubber molding. Go to amazon.com and search for "west system 804".
- A rubber mallet with a sock over it
- Some masking tape
- Some soapy water. People use all sorts of stuff but I just used glass cleaner i.e. Windex. I like the fact that it evaporates fast. Once you get the trim properly into a spot then you want the rubber dry and not slippery anymore so the trim stays put and does not wiggle out!
- Kleenex: read the warning on the bottom of page 1



Example of a safe prying tool. Mine still had a bit of epoxy on them! I rounded the corners with a knife.



INSTALLATION INSTRUCTIONS:

At the 10,000 foot level: You will be hooking the trim into the groove of the molding by forcing open the groove with a doubled up wire, then pushing the trim into place and working your way down the length of the trim, pulling out the wire as you go.

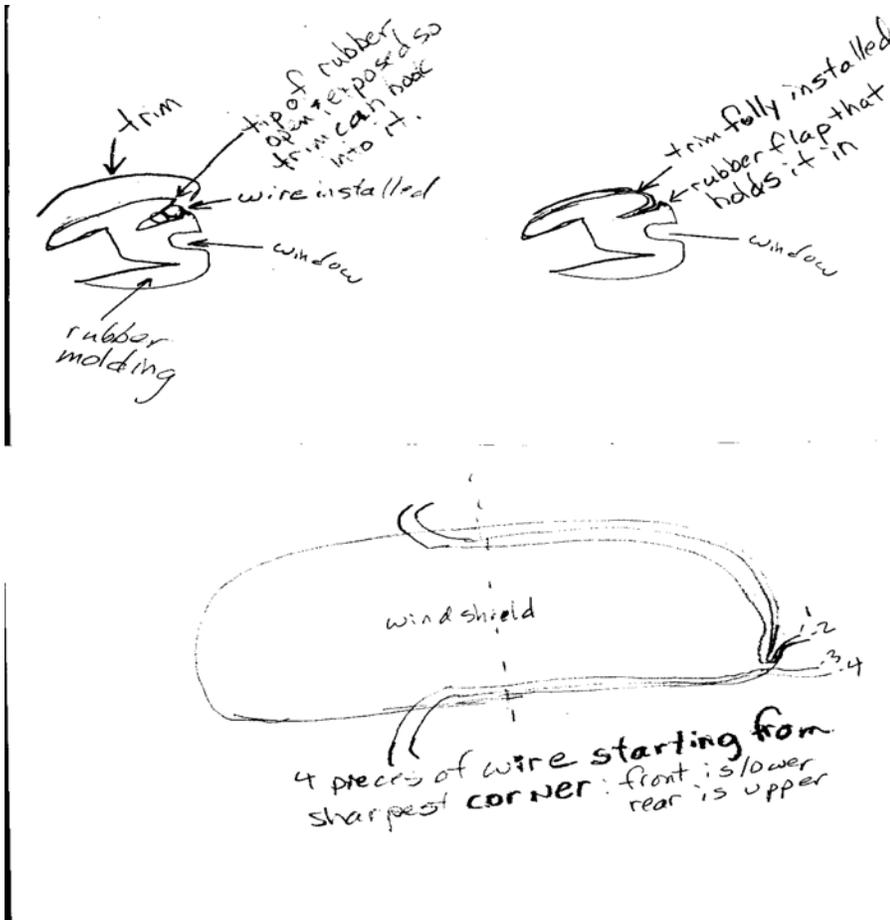
1) Get the wire in: one side at a time.

The basic idea is that you will be doubling up the wire in the c-groove. Plus you will be starting from the sharpest corner. It's best to start at the sharpest radius corner so you can pull the trim in as tight as possible to the shape of the window. Or stated another way; the sharpest corner is where the wires will emanate from so that you can pull 2 of the wires left and 2 of the wires right. Please see photos.

On the front window the 'sharpest corner' starting point is the lower left and right corners and on the rear window this is the upper corners. Thus you need 4 pieces of wire. Take 2 of your pieces of wire and work into the trim groove from the sharp corner to beyond half way across (where the trim piece will end) and then take the other 2 pieces of wire and work the other way.

Why double up the wire? Because you want that edge of the C rubber molding to stick up enough to get the trim to hook into it. See crude hand drawing below. If you use just a single wire then you will find that the wire slips too deep into the molding and is almost useless. When you finish just this "wiring stage" on half the windshield you should see the wire insulation of the wire all the way around. See red wire in pix. The trim edge of the molding should be uniformly pushed up by the wire. If it's not smooth and continuous then the trim won't slip into it nicely and you will have little pockets where the trim won't sit down properly when you are finished.

Use Windex to make it easier. Spread the trim groove with one finger and push the wire in with the other hand.





Sharpest corner with wires all in.



This photo is when doing the second trim piece on the front window.

2) Start working the trim into the sharp corner.

This will be a leap of faith when you start. You won't think it will ultimately work but you just have to open a beer or wine, put on some music and get comfortable. Getting the first piece fully in can take hours.

So grab the trim and hook it into the groove opened up by the wire. Start in the sharpest corner and push and tug until you get the corner hooked in good. Then work around the short side towards the middle. On the front this will be in the middle on the bottom. You may not be able to get it hooked in all the way to the middle. Just take it as far as you can then tape it so the rascal does not slip out.

Then work from the sharp corner up the more round corner and see how far you can get it hooked in. Tape it. At this point, I would take a rubber mallet to it and gently tap at the corners to see if you really have pulled it in tight all the way into the lower corner.



Slide the trim over the molding so it hooks in. Hook the sharp corner and work down to the middle.



This shows the back window starting from the sharp upper corner.

3) Pull the wire out in sections while getting trim down, flat and in-tight

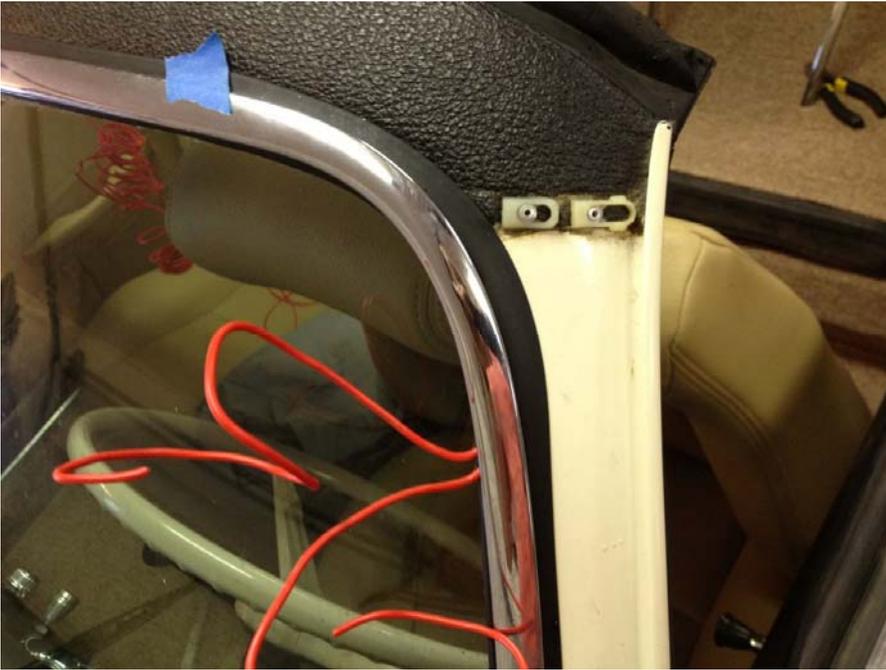
Pull the wire out like 3" to 6" at a time. If you do it right (and are lucky) the wire pulls back the flap (see crude hand drawing) so you can just push the trim in. When you start in the corner, you are going to need to pull the wire on each side out 3". If you don't have 6" without wire the trim won't want to fully seat. When it's fully seated, the flap will cover the edge and hold it snugly in. See the crude hand drawing again.

Use the pry tools to help it along. You can slide the tool along the flap and push the trim into the groove. Also be pushing down on the broad side of the trim. Keep it lubed with soapy water or Windex. Tap it with the mallet if you need to. Use two pry tools to help get it started if you need to.

Sometime the wire gets willful or tucked in too far. This is the **only** place where I used a steel screwdriver.

When you have done your best with the sharp corner then start moving towards an end of trim pulling several inches of wire out at a time. Don't get hung up on the corner not being perfect. The corner is the toughest. But do try to make sure that corner trim is in as tight as it will go.





Working up the side. See how far the trim needs to be pushed into the molding.



On rear: done with top now go for bottom.

4) Finish off the sharp corner to the middle.

For your first piece, finish the sharp corner to the middle. If it's in so that flap is nicely holding it all the way then tape it. If it is not nicely in and everything parallel then keep trying, or consider pulling it out and starting again. It is at this point where you realize the first steps with the wire etc need to be near perfect.

5) Move onto other corner.

When the above looks good then do the other corner and work your way to the middle.

6) Half done!

On my first half trim, this took about 4 hours while I figured out the technique. Give it a break for the day!

7) On to the other half.

First put the 2 clips on the installed piece before you forget. Slide them on far enough to make room for the other side. Use the pry tool to safely push the clip.

This side should go quicker but still took me a few hours. There were very little in the way of gaps between the 2 trim halves. So do a check when you get to one edge. When you get the other side in push the clips across so they join both trim pieces. Again, use the pry tool to safely push the clip.



Done!

7) More notes:

If you have an inch or two where you just can't get the flap to lock in the trim then the trim is probably not seated in the groove at some point: something went wrong at the wire stage. Prepare to just live with it or pull the trim all out and start again.

On the windshield, I had no gap on the top between the 2 halves and yet somehow too much trim on the bottom. So I grinded off like a 1/16th of an inch. The clip will cover it. I guess even with the mallet I did not get the corners pulled all the way tight. I did not have this issue on the rear window.

For me the whole process took more than 10 hours. I would do half a window per night. The final 4th half trim piece still took about 1.5 hours.



Darn trim is somehow too long. So grind it a tad shorter.



Can't emphasize how important the safe pry tool it. Here I use it to push the clip across safely without leaving a scratch.