

Mazda Miata Leather Radio Surround and Center Console installation instructions

Materials Needed

- Contact cement
- Old paint brushes or foam brushes
- Scotchbrite pads
- Padded C Clamps
- One or two small beanbags, hackey sack or similar item
- Clips (clothes pins work well but anything that won't damage the leather will work)
- 3M Blue Low Tack Painter's tape
- Exacto blade
- 5 minute epoxy
- Kitchen shears or other sharp scissors for cutting leather
- Cat (optional)
- 3M #80 headliner spray adhesive (optional)
- Dremel Moto-Tool with sanding and grinding and polishing wheels.

Working Notes

- **Read over all these instructions before you get started.** Every product from Redline is handmade, so a good fit will require some manipulation on your part. There are some suggestions in these directions that will help you get the best possible fit.
- **The goal here is to get the leather to stay put.** Excess glue will take longer to dry and may also limit your ability to stretch the leather into place, but do not use the contact cement sparingly. The plastic Mazda uses for the console and radio surround are very durable and resistant to adhesives. You may want to rough the surface with scotchbrite pads to promote adhesion. Use a thin coat of contact cement on the leather and on the plastic for faster drying time. Contact cement can be forgiving, so don't be afraid to pull the leather away and reposition it with a little more glue. Avoid repositioning the leather more than once. Reposition the leather too much and your corrections will show through the leather in the form of lumps or waves in the surface.
- **Keep your fingers clean of contact cement at all times.** Contact cement can be messy. The glue is not good for your skin and will leave shiny marks on the leather that you will not be able to clean off. Wearing gloves will help, but you may not have as much control manipulating the leather into position. Always be mindful of what's on your fingers when working with the leather.
 - If you get contact cement on the finished side of the leather, use the blue tape's adhesive to try to pull the contact cement off the leather. Press the tape on top of the spot firmly and slowly peel it back. If the contact cement has not cured, it will have the consistency of rubber cement (paper glue). The painter's tape adhesive should grab the contact cement and pull it off the leather. It may take several tries.
 - Do not use any other method to remove contact cement. Even your fingernails can damage the leather if you pick at it hard enough.
- **Last, but certainly not least - Contact cement has very strong fumes and is flammable!** Be sure to work in a well ventilated area with no open flames.

Radio Surround Instructions:

1. Thoroughly wash off the radio surround to clean off any protectant, waxes or other surface contaminants. Since the whole thing will be covered in leather, consider using Scotchbrite pads to rough up the surface.
2. Prepare the openings to accommodate the leather skin.
 - a. The air vents, hazard and headlamp buttons will bind on the leather if you do not make the holes bigger. 1 or 2mm is all you need. Test fit your work by placing scrap leather pieces between the button and radio surround to be sure it clears.
 - b. Work slowly as you open up these holes so they stay round
 - c. Trim away the molded plastic ring that surrounds the headlamp and hazard buttons with an Exacto blade, then smooth the plastic down with sandpaper or polishing tool. If you leave the ring in place, it will prevent the leather from making contact with the plastic.



3. Cover the radio surround with the leather and tape into place. Be sure to leave some overhang over the bottom of the radio surround as indicated in the photo.
4. Apply a little contact cement around the button holes and place the leather over the holes. Be sure to apply a little pressure to get the contact cement to hold in the area between the button holes.



5. Think of the leather over the hole as a freshly baked pizza you need to cut. First cut a small cross in the middle of the area where the button will go. Then cut each quarter to make eighths for a total of eight sections. Pull each section of leather through to the back side and glue into place. You can hold the section down with a piece of blue tape as indicated below.



6. Once you have all the sections glued into place, use epoxy to coat everything over. This will ensure that the leather does not come up if the contact cement should give way from heat or cold. With so little surface area to hold the leather in place, a little coating of epoxy is extra insurance you won't have to correct something later on.



7. If you've done it right, you should have something that looks like this on the front:



8. The buttons are the toughest part of this project. Now that you have this behind you, you can glue down the leather on the sides and front of the radio surround. You do not want to do too much stretching or pulling on the leather because this will disrupt the seam that runs around the face of the radio surround. (Red stitching on the photo above)

9. Once the glue has cured, you may begin cutting away leather for radio, HVAC controls and air vents. Remember that it is better to cut away too little than too much! You will not be able to stretch the leather from the front face to the back of the radio surround. Cut slits at each corner to allow the leather to stretch over the face of the radio surround.



10. Glue down the leather inside the “mouth” of the HVAC section. Allow the glue to cure while being held in place with tape.



11. Once the glue has cured, you can leave the leather as is, or cut the tabs away for a neater look. To cover the entire “mouth” of the HVAC section in leather, you will need to use scrap leather cut away from the double-DIN radio opening. Cut strips of leather about 1cm in width. Use a metal straightedge to be sure your strips are cut true. Glue the strips inside the mouth and affix them next to the leather that was stretched into place. If you have some gaps between the strip and the leather already there, cut the stretched leather away as straight as possible. It may take a few strips to cover the interior, but you won’t see them all when you’re behind the wheel.
- This can be a tricky process, but it looks much better than a strip of exposed plastic behind the leather stretched over the face. It is very difficult to hide the seam you will leave, but a small, neat seam is better than plastic gummed up with glue.
 - Strips of flocking or velvet may be a viable alternative if you don’t want to use leather strips.



12. Cut away the openings for the air vents as you did for the radio buttons. Use a lot of small tabs to make stretching the leather into place a little easier. Glue down the leather and test fit the air vents. You do not want the air vents to fit too loose or too tight. (you may need to remove them again in the future!) You can bend the airball retainer tabs to make removal a little easier.





13. Trim away any excess leather from the tabs so the airball slides in place. It should lock into position as it did before you began this project. You can install the airballs to hold the tabs in place while the glue dries.
14. Glue down the edges of the radio surround and inside the mouth of the double-DIN opening. Trim away any excess leather. Glue down the front edge of the leather as indicated below (blue tape strips).
 - a. *The leather over the front face of the radio surround will hide the cut edge of the leather in the seam between the radio surround and center console. This WILL make fitting the console and radio surround a little difficult. You can resolve this by enlarging the holes that the radio surround uses to connect the center console. Trimming away a little plastic from the front edge of the center console also helps!*
 - b. *Be sure to do a lot of test fitting between the radio surround and the center console before you start gluing leather down. You want to make the leather seam from the radio surround line up with the seam from the center console.*



Center Console Instructions:

1. The center console is actually a little easier than the radio surround. You will use some of the same techniques to stretch the leather into place. Again, work carefully and methodically to get the leather in place the way you want it.
 - c. You will notice that the hole for the shifter was simply cut away (below, right). **DO NOT DO THIS TO YOURS!**



2. The above right shifter hole was cut this way to accommodate a trim ring from IL Motorsport. Stretch and tuck your the leather underneath this hole. If you do not have the IL Motorsport trim ring or something similar, you will have an ugly EXPOSED cut edge! Tuck under!



3. You will need to leave the area for the console hinges uncovered. You can glue the leather to the top edge of the console box and trim away as you see fit. The area between the lid and console must also be left uncovered. If you wish to cover this area, you will need to sand away some plastic so the lid can close without binding. **You will have to use scrap for this portion of the project because the Redline console skin does not cover these areas.**



18. The interior of your console can be covered with flocking or leather or other covering. While interior of the console box is not the most finished look, everything looks great when the console cover is closed. Not bad for 18 years of service!

Before:



After:

