



## Miata Hitch Installation Instructions

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Hard Dog offers three hitches for the MX-5, one for each generation. Listed below are the instructions for each installation type.

### **1st Generation / 1990 - 1997, item #R1**

- Jack up the rear of the Miata. Be sure to support the car with sturdy jack stands. BE CAREFUL!!!!
- Remove the rear tie-down hooks and save the attaching fasteners.
- Install the hitch in place of the tie-downs using the OEM tie-down fasteners.

### **2nd Generation / 1999 - 2005, item #R2**

- Jack up the rear of the Miata. Be sure to support the car with sturdy jack stands. BE CAREFUL!!!!
- The hitch will mount between the tie down loops welded under the rear of the car.
- Remove the bolts, washers and backup plates attached to the hitch.
- Push the hitch up until the mounting brackets are approximately even with the bottom of the structure to which the tie down loops are welded. Check clearance under the bumper and using the hitch as a template mark the chassis for the 8 holes to be drilled. Take the hitch back down and drill 3/8" holes at the previously marked spots. Depending on the type drill you are using it may be helpful to remove the heat shield over the muffler. Put the hitch back in position and push a bolt through on either side to hold it in place.
- Slide the backup plates into place. The outer plates go inside the square "hole" just inside the tie down loops. Align the plates and start all bolts before tightening any. Tighten the bolts to 35-40 ft lbs (the bolts will seem hard to tighten because of the self locking nuts used on the backup plates).

### **3rd Generation / 2006 and up, item #R3**

Installation requires removal of the rear bumper cover and the steel bumper. This seems like a lot to do but is a relatively easy task. No need to raise the car off the ground for this one.

- Open the trunk, remove the carpet and plastic trunk wall panels. The carpet is held in place by simple plastic buttons that pull out easily. The side panels are attached by reusable plastic rivets that are loosened by lifting the center button with a knife blade or fingernail which allows the fastener to be removed. Unplug the wires attached to the rear panel for the trunk latch and light.
- Remove the tail lights. Unplug the tail light wiring, 3 plugs per side, remove the three nuts per side that hold the light assemblies in place. The lights are usually stuck to the car, be careful not to let them drop.
- Remove the rear wheel splash panels. These are held in place by screws behind the rear wheels and on the bottom.
- Remove the rear bumper cover. There are screws behind the splash panels you just removed inside the wheel wells, behind the license plate and on top in the trunk opening. There are two more of those plastic rivets in the tail light opening. (larger than the ones that hold the trunk panels) Once you have all of the fasteners removed pull the

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bumper cover loose by

slightly twisting while pulling on the wheel and tail light openings to unsnap the attachments.

- Remove the steel rear bumper assembly by removing the three 17mm hex nuts per side using a ratchet, 6" extension and deep well socket through the holes provided.
- Install the hitch over the bumper studs and snug one of the nuts to hold it in place. Put on the safety glasses. Using the hitch as a template, drill 3/8" holes through the upper mounting plates. Install the bolts, backing plates and self locking nuts and torque to 40 ft / lbs. The three threaded studs per side that hold the steel bumper in place should protrude through the hitch plate leaving one hole empty. Drill a 3/8" hole through the empty hole. Remove the nut you initially installed to hold the hitch in place and reinstall the steel bumper. Use Locktite or some type thread locker on the stock nuts and torque to 40 ft / lbs. Install the bolts, washers and self locking nuts provided with the hitch into the holes you just drilled and torque to 40 ft / lbs. From under the steel bumper drill a vertical 3/8" hole through the bumper and the hitch reinforcement plate. Install the bolt, washer and self locking nut provided and torque to 40 ft / lbs.
- Reinstall the rear bumper cover, make sure you don't have any extra parts. You can notch the cover if you like to somewhat obscure the hitch but this is not an absolute necessity.
- Reinstall and plug in the tail lights. Do NOT over torque the tail light fasteners, remember these are plastic. Check the lights to make sure everything is operational.
- Reinstall the splash shield, trunk panels and carpet.

**Do not exceed the vehicle towing capacity.**

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