

Let's face it—most folks don't buy a Wrangler to tote around four people every day...or at all. That rear seat, if it's still there, usually gets covered with coolers, tow straps, muddy boots or camping gear. There's a good chance it was pulled and is collecting dust in the garage.

If this is you, your options for a practical top outside of the standard full hard and soft tops have been limited. Ever take the windjammer/bikini/soft door setup route to try to fake a half-top for that rainy ride to the trail? Have you seen what an errant branch can do to a soft top window or frame?

GR8TOPS has an interesting conversion product for Jeepers who want to ditch their rear seat, close the cab and put all that rear cargo area to good use. It uses a half hardtop and bulkhead arrangement along with stock doors to help turn TJs and LJs (Wrangler Unlimited) into mini-pickups. The GR8TOPS kit consists of the hardtop and a unique bulkhead that encloses the rear portion of the lower cab to provide a quiet seating area while delivering the versatility of an open truck bed.

With a GR8TOPS half hardtop kit installed, AC is colder, heat is hotter, and you can load the bed with whatever you want and just hose it out when you're

done. It also doesn't take three people to install and remove—which is a big plus when it's time to go topless. And let's not forget the retro-cool factor. Remember the CJ-8 Scramblers? What about the old half-top Army Jeeps? Half-tops on Jeeps are just plain sweet.

The half hardtop and bulkheads are molded fiberglass with a resilient, textured marine-grade gelcoat exterior finish. The inside has a rubberized texture coating that's easily wiped down and is also designed to dampen road noise. The standard hardtops have a clear sliding glass rear window for ventilation. Options available

on the kit include tinted rear glass, built-in speaker pods in the bulkhead (to transfer your existing speaker pod speakers or add larger ones) and an integrated LED third brake light.

As you'll see, installing a GR8TOPS half hardtop kit requires modification of the factory rollbar. To allow for the fabrication and attachment of the replacement rear rollbar members, GR8TOPS offers rubber gaskets that install around the existing cage tubing where it passes through the hardtop. New rear cage pieces can be installed with the weld-in tubing disconnect joints (also available from GR8TOPS) while still allowing the hardtop to be installed and removed. As a final option, the original full hardtop or soft top can also be reinstalled after removing the half hardtop, but the bulkhead can stay in place.

The
GR8TOPS

**Add cargo capacity and utility...
and cool retro-styling...to your
Wrangler with GR8TOPS'
conversion kit**

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TOP THIS!

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bulkhead and half hardtop conversion will take about four to six hours. Fabrication of the replacement rear cage is shown, but that requires additional time. Follow along as we convert this 2004 Jeep Unlimited into a useful cargo carrier.

Tools Needed

Utility knife
 Socket set
 Torx bits: T30, T45
 Cordless drill
 1/4- and 5/8-inch drill bits
 2.5-inch hole saw bit
 Hacksaw or electric Sawzall
 with a fine-tooth metal bit
 Ratchet strap
 Tape measure
 Welder or facility to do welding
 on the cage tubing disconnect joint
 Grease pen/marker

Supplies Needed

Masking tape
 Roll of camper foam/truck
 topper tape
 One tube of exterior/outdoor
 adhesive caulk



1. & 2. Remove the OEM soft top or hardtop and the existing frame and all hardware. The factory plastic soft top door surrounds must be removed as well. Remove the rear carpet (both the center floor piece and the two wheel well pieces). Flip the two front seats forward to give as much cab room as possible for the installation process.



3. The existing factory speaker pods must be removed to install the top. Use a T30 Torx bit to remove the speaker pod bolts (two per pod). Unzip the main rollbar padding that houses the speaker and overhead light electrical harness. This harness will later be used for the installation of the speakers in the speaker pods (an optional feature in the GR8TOPS bulkhead). You can pull the harness that is taped to the cage and remove it from under the cage padding. Remove the internal short wiring harness pieces inside the factory speaker pods. These also can be reused later.



5. Unzip the black cloth cage padding covers up to the main shoulder cage hoop and cut the rear section of the cover as shown. We used a utility knife and cut the external black padding at the sewn seam up at the main hoop.



7. Use a T45 Torx bit to unbolt the rear feet of the rear cage pieces on the wheel wells. Be sure save these bolts for future use. There are two Torx head bolts per side.

9. (Right) Use a hacksaw or Sawzall and cut both the driver and passenger side rear cage bars on the tape markings. Make sure your cuts are straight, because a piece of tubing will need to be inserted inside the cut tubes.



4. Using a T45 Torx bit, remove the rear shoulder seat belts. The upper shoulder mount bolt can be accessed by popping the plastic cover from the bottom edge. Remove the lower shoulder mount bolt by the rear cage foot and also on the inside of the lower wheel well. Remove the center floor seat belt receptacle and the two black rear seat brackets that are mounted to the floor.



6. Separate and remove the hard shell foam pads from the rear cage pieces. Each piece has a plastic insert that is popped into place on the rear bars. Carefully remove the foam pieces from the inserts in the cage.



8. Measure 4.5 inches from inside the main hoop, along the rear cage bars on both sides. This tends to be just about centered between the speaker pod mounting bolt dimples. Mark this with a piece of tape all the way around the bar to serve as the cut marks for the rear bars.



TOP THIS!



10. At this point the integrity and strength of the original cage has been compromised, but GR8TOPS provides custom tubing disconnect joints that permit the cage to be rebuilt with a strong disconnect to allow the bars to be removed and reinstalled.



11. We solicited the qualified help of Carolina Rock Shop to fabricate two sets of new rear rollbar pieces using the GR8TOPS tubing disconnects. On the floor end, both sets had foot plates installed to mate to the existing rollbar mounting holes. One set was designed in the retro Scrambler/CJ look and the other used the OEM pieces we removed. This way we can actually reinstall the factory cage bars, the factory seat belts and rear seat if we ever want to return to the stock setup.



12. The completed cage provides better triangulation than the stock setup and offers many future options, such as a bed-mounted spare tire carrier or a Hi-Lift jack mount. Adding a front down the dash cage kit would also structurally enhance the factory cage.



13. Clean the mounting surface on the Jeep wheel wells and floor where the bulkhead will be installed. The floor usually has several rough spots where the factory used a seam sealer. We used a 4.5-inch grinder with a wire wheel to knock down the raised areas of the hard seam sealer.



14. Before installing the GR8TOPS bulkhead into the Jeep, install foam adhesive tape onto the lower bulkhead piece. Carefully install the foam layer across the complete lower edge of the bulkhead.



15. Lower the bulkhead into place. The bulkhead has a contoured molded ledge that conforms to the Unlimited's wheel wells and lower step ledge. Once the bulkhead is positioned, use the supplied self-tapping sheetmetal screws to install the bulkhead into place from inside the cab. There are four pre-drilled holes on the bottom and two on either wheel well location of the bulkhead. For standard short-wheelbase TJs, the bulkhead is a different shape, but the installation process is the same.



16. Install a layer of camper foam tape on the top ledge of the bulkhead and to the 5- to 6-inch stretch of Jeep body rail. This helps prevent scuffing and provides a good seal between the hardtop and the Jeep body.



17. Set the hardtop on the side bedrails. Slide the hardtop forward until the tubing disconnect joints are touching the inside surface of the hardtop.



18. Using a grease pencil, mark circles on the inside of the hardtop on both the driver and passenger sides where the disconnects touch the top. These marks will be used for cutting the access holes to allow the cage to pass through the top. Ensure that the hardtop is sitting completely and firmly on the bedrails to guarantee that the hole markings are in the correct position.



19. Remove the hardtop from the Jeep. This is a **VERY IMPORTANT** step to ensure the tubing connect holes are cut in the proper location. Using a 2.5-inch hole saw, drill pilot holes on both markings. Drill pilot holes on the inside of the top first. **DO NOT** drill completely through the top, as this will chip the gelcoat paint and/or leave shards. Once both holes have been started from the inside, drill from the outside of the hardtop until the hole has been completely drilled out.



20. Slide the hardtop back onto the Jeep and position it into place. The bars should now pass through the newly cut holes on the hardtop and allow you to fully position the hardtop on the windshield. Ensure that the cage tubing joint is centered in the hole. If it is not, you may need to trim a small amount around the hole to ensure it is centered. Be careful not to enlarge the hole too much, as the rubber grommet flange needs to cover and seal the hole.



21. GR8TOPS can provide the optional rubber grommets to seal the hole in the hardtop where the tubing passes through. Move the top back past the tubing disconnects and install the two rubber grommets using a light amount of lithium grease or WD-40 to help when sliding the top back over the tubing joints.



22. Now it's time to actually install the hardtop. Carefully pass the two cage tubing joints through the lubricated rubber grommets. Slowly move the hardtop forward until it is in the proper position in relation to the windshield frame and the door openings. Set the hardtop into place on the windshield rubber gasket, adjusting the hardtop to ensure the doors fit. Use the front adjustable cam latches with the hook to connect to the same locations as the factory top latches. Adjust the tension on the cam latch so that the seal on the top of the windshield gasket is tight.



23. Once the hardtop is positioned correctly in relation to the door openings and the windshield frame, use a C-clamp to align the exterior surface of the hardtop in the bed flush with the bulkhead surface. With the two surfaces flush, drill three 5/8-inch holes across the back of the hardtop to hold it securely to the bulkhead. Drill one hole in the center of bulkhead and center the other two holes behind the driver and passenger seat. Install the supplied flat washers, and bolts and washers.



24. Now that the hardtop is completely installed, reinstall the rear cage tubing pieces. These will need to be painted black or painted to match the Jeep body color.



25. The best solution to completely seal the front section of the cabin around the bulkhead is to have the bed sprayed with a spray-in bed liner. Any brand of bedliner will stick to the fiberglass bulkhead after a light scuffing. We will be taking this Jeep to have a spray-in bedliner completed. Alternatively, if you choose not have a spray-in bedliner, a good bead of silicone caulk around the bottom of the bulkhead will be needed to completely seal the lower part of the bulkhead. Finally, be sure to remove the rubber grommets in the floor of the bed to allow water to easily drain.

More Options

The GR8TOPS half hardtop kit comes with three optional upgrades: LED third brake light, dark tint sliding rear window and integrated speaker pods built into the bulkhead. The integrated speaker pods allow you to cut your own speaker openings to transfer the speakers from the OEM speaker pods or upgrade to larger speakers. The LED third brake light option simply requires you to tap into the third brake light wiring that is located inside the passenger rear fender well. Both the LED brake light and the speaker options have detailed, easy-to-follow installation instructions available for download at www.gr8tops.com. The dark tint sliding window upgrade is real tinted glass, not film, and comes installed. GR8TOPS will soon be offering pre-fabbed rear cage sections using the tubing disconnects.

