

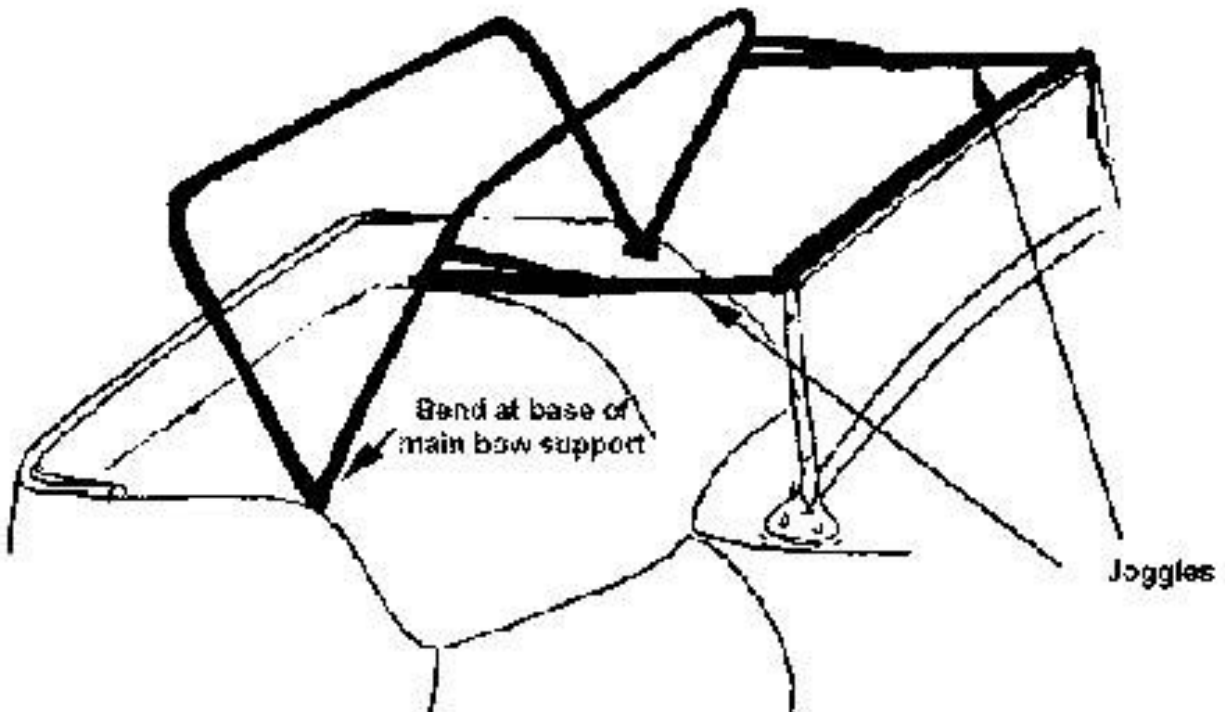
Fitting a TA Hood

There seems to be very little information published about fitting hoods on our cars. Even the hood makers seem reluctant to supply written instructions. Having struggled, cursed, trawled the internet for help, and eventually just about succeeded in making a passable job of fitting my hood, I have prepared the following guidelines to help others avoid some of the mistakes that I made. The instructions and dimensions are specifically for the fitting of a replacement hood and sidescreen covers to a TA. General pointers may be useful for TCs but dimensions and details may differ.

All the original TA hoods were black single duck with matching "leatherette" piping. They were reputed to last a couple of seasons at best so all TAs will have had many hoods fitted from many differing sources. The best we can hope for by way of accurate patterns now are period works photographs. Also hood fabrics shrink and some past owners will have tried to accommodate tight hoods by tweaking the frames and moving mounting holes. If you are attempting to fit a replacement hood on your TA, start from scratch and check everything step by step. Be warned, the job is not an easy one and a "concours" fit will require a lot of time and patience.

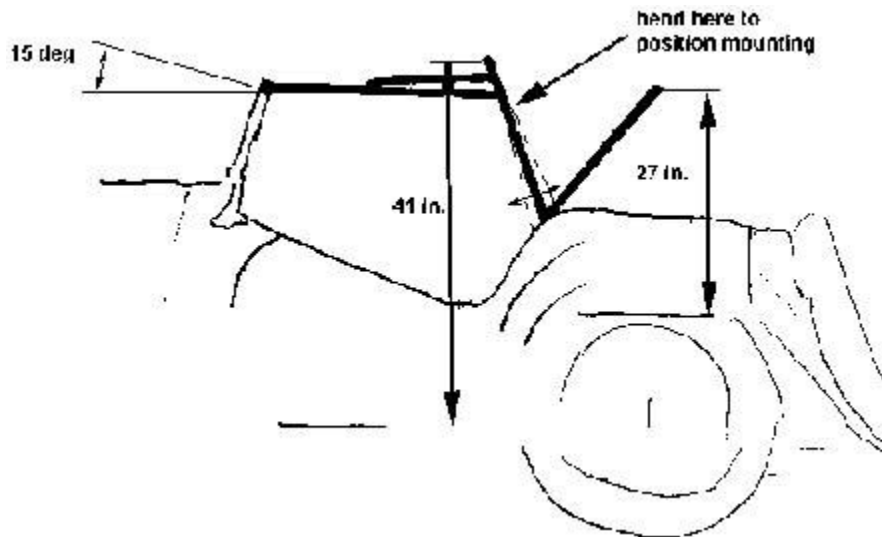
Step 1 Fitting the Hood Frame

Straighten any obviously incorrect bends in side arms. The only bends should be the ones shown in figure 1.



Check that the section that sits on top of the windscreen is welded to the horizontal side arms at the same angle as the windscreen. The correct angle is shown in figure 2 but some variation seems to exist from car to car. If your screen mounting is a bit sloppy ensure that it forms a good line with the screen brackets when you check this angle. Next check that the bows are not distorted. They should form a uniform curve with the centre about 1 in. higher than the ends. Again some variation seems to exist so don't worry about the exact curve unless it is obvious that the hoops have been bent.

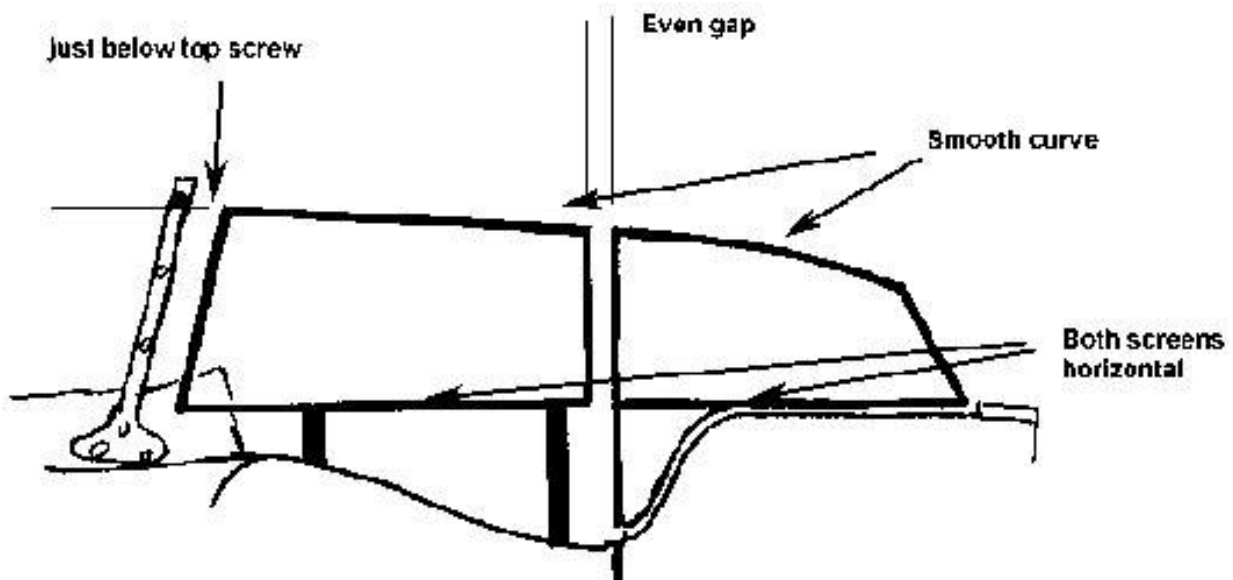
With the frame folded, position it horizontally in the tonneau with the bows touching the back wall and chalk a vertical line on the trim where the frame mounting bracket comes. Open the hood frame and secure the horizontal section in the locked position. Fit a 41 in. wooden batten vertically under the central hoop and with a friend on the other side, set the frame to 41 in above the floor boards as shown in figure 2. If you are lucky you will be able to clamp the frame to the screen and the mounting bracket will be in line with your chalked line. If your frame was acquired from another car or you have fitted a new body tub it will likely that the bracket will be in front or behind the line, in which case you will need to bend the side arms at the point shown in figure 2. You should finish up with the mounting brackets positioned right on the centre of the body curve with the fixing screws passing through the centre of the hidem binding on the trim. Clamp the fixing brackets to the car using suitable clamps and thick rubber pads to protect paintwork. The body skin is well supported on solid timber at this point so there is no risk of distorting the metal by clamping. Recheck that the frame still folds into the tonneau. When you are satisfied screw the frame in position with no. 8 bright plated steel woodscrews with countersunk slotted heads. Do not use plated brass screws as they are not strong enough, or Pozidrive screws which were not introduced until after the war.



Step 2 Fitting Side Screen Frames and Trim

The rear frames should now be fitted to the car, located by the tangs that slot into the body. Set the lower rails horizontal and the rail above the door hinge vertical.

The front frames are then fitted to the doors and adjusted so that their lower rails are horizontal and in line with the rear frames. Again the rails above the door hinge should be vertical and the gaps even. The top arms should line up just below the top screw of the windscreen frame. See figure 3. Frames should be painted black.



The clamp plates can be screwed to the door trim and the rear body trim when you are satisfied with the alignment of the frames. The correct clamp plates should be circular with 3 mounting holes and a 3/8 Whit stud. TCs had rectangular plates. The now rare original domed clamp nut had a very slender single lever of most elegant proportions. Most reproduction ones are instantly recognisable by their clompy leavers. The plates should span the hidem banding. The holes on my original doors would indicate that 2 screws should be above the banding and one below. No 8 steel woodscrews should again be used.

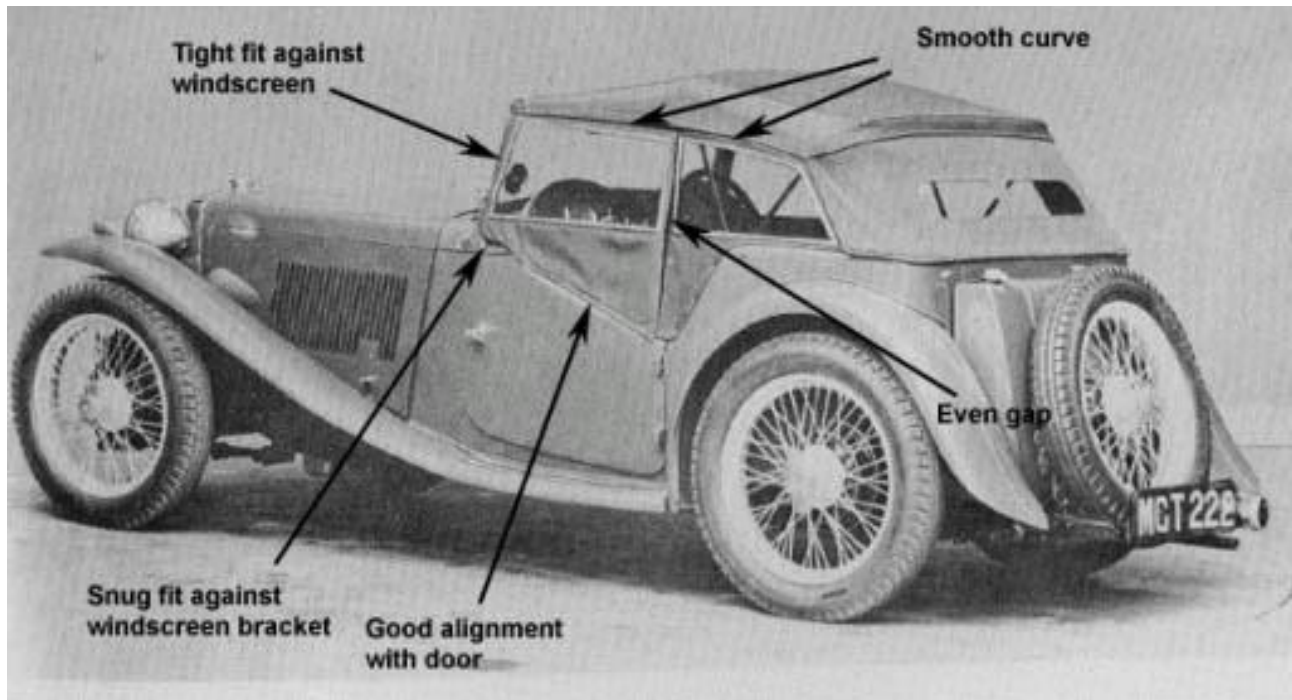
Next it is necessary to mitre the trims. The original pre-war trims were chromium plated and if the Service Parts List is to be believed, supplied as a single assembled outer frame. Fortunately, a suitable section trim in stainless steel was used on the sides of some 70s Triumph cars and Morgan sidescreens. That section is still available, together with special captive fixing screws.

Measure each corner angle with a protractor. It goes without saying that the angle of the mitre must be exactly half the corner angle. I used a woodworking JointMaster adjustable mitre cutting gauge and a fine tooth hacksaw to cut the mitres. If you need to make small adjustments with a grinder be very careful as stainless steel will overheat and colour very easily.

The complete sidescreen trim set can be made from 4 x 72 in. lengths. You will also need 62 Tee bolts and nuts.

My experience was that the back covers were a good fit but front covers needed modification. It is probably best to make paper templates and arrange for covers to be made up to suit your car if the best fit is required. I found paper carpet underlay ideal for making the templates.

Figure 4 shows the detail points you should be aiming for.



Once you have acquired suitable covers they should be aligned with the frames and trims and the holes punched for the fixing screws. They should align with the stitching but rarely do. Take your time and check against the car before you start cutting or drilling - mistakes cannot be corrected easily! Chalk the covers to show where to cut the canvas for the window aperture. You will need a strong pair of scissors (NOT your wife's or partner's dressmaking scissors as you will need her co-operation later when you fit the hood), and a "Stanley" knife for the corners. To avoid scratching the celluloid when you cut the windows (as I did) protect the inside blade of your scissors with plastic tape and also slide a piece of stout card between the canvas and the celluloid. Once the windows have been cut, fix the covers to the frames with the trims and special tee bolts. I found the bolts a little on the short side and the nuts supplied were slightly countersunk. I overcame the problem by tapping a 2 BA sharp edged thread in a piece of 1/4 bar which I used to pull the screws through the covers and frames before fitting the nuts.

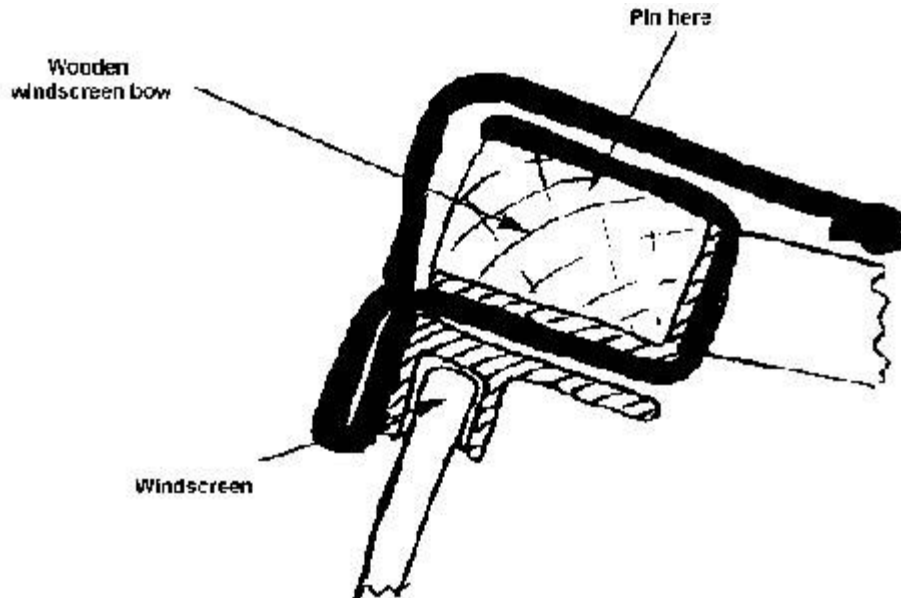
The lower part of the rear screens should be riveted to the frames with 5 visible rivets. The originals were probably upholsterer's bifurcated copper rivets but I used brake lining rivets.

On a TA and TB the straps that keep the signalling flaps shut should be secured with a "lift-a-dot" fastener with the stud through the centre of the hidem banding of the door trim. TCs used a "Durable Dot" press stud.

Do not worry about the frayed edges at the window aperture as this will give your car the authentic "MG look". You will probably be less tolerant of the scratches that the metal frames will make to the paintwork on the sides of the scuttle. The TA parts book lists a rubber buffer, B269/184, which I assume was to protect the bodywork from the offending section of frame.

Step 3 Fitting the Weather Strip and Frame Straps

The windscreen weather strip (a somewhat euphemistic term in this context) should be fitted as shown in figure 5. Firstly check that the wooden windscreen bow is in serviceable condition and replace if required. The weather strip should have a "vee" cut out to clear the drivers side wiper bearing and a rectangular cut-out to clear the passenger side wiper and wiper motor mounting. You will need to cut holes in the canvas for the windscreen pegs and the hood fixing screws.



The lower section of the weather strip should pass under the frame and over both the steel framework and the wooden bow. It should be pulled tight to force a good seal against the windscreen. I found it assisted fitting to use a contact adhesive to initially secure the canvas to the top of the rail, followed by upholstery tacks (tin tacks). Trim the flap flush with the front face of the windscreen bow.

The webbing frame straps goes on next, tacked to the top of the rail.

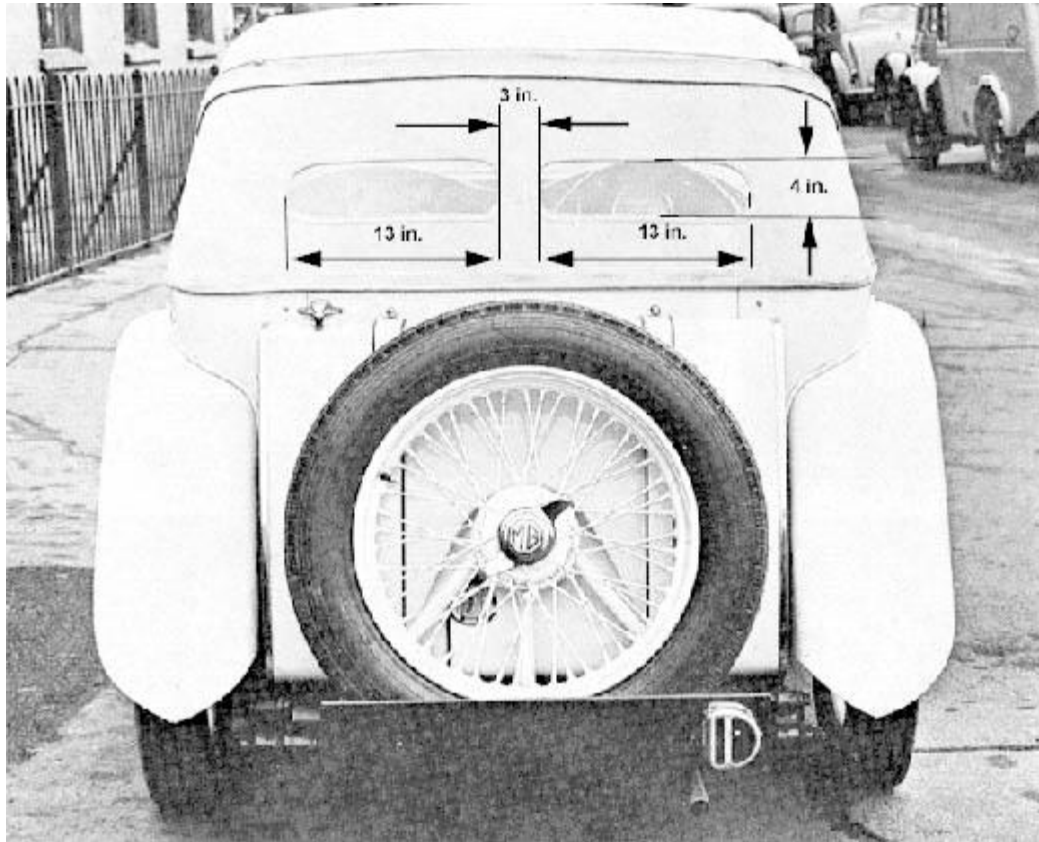
The remaining top flap of the weather strip covers the tacks and passes over the windscreen bow. Opinions differ as to how much overlap should be left and whether the flap, which will be visible inside the car, should be left as a cut edge or seamed. Since no other internal edges on the hood are seamed, I doubt it this one was originally. I did however seam mine and I left about 1 in. visible.

Attach the webbing to the central frame bow. I used a "pop" rivet and washer passing through the hole in the bow - I've no idea what was used originally but it doesn't show anyway.

Set the rear bow 27 in. above the tonneau floor, as shown in figure 2, and temporarily attach it to the webbing. Secure the webbing to the 3 piece tacking strip at the back of the tonneau with upholstery pins. I positioned the webbing centrally over the joints in the tacking strip, having been unable to establish the original location.

Step 4 Fitting the Hood

TA, TB, and early TC hoods had 2 small back windows as shown in figure 6. If you drive around with the hood up, you might consider having a larger single rear window made up to the TC dimensions so you can see the Renault HiAce van that always seems to be driving 2 feet from your petrol tank. I mainly use the hood to keep the seats dry when parked so I went for the split windows which have the delightful charm of an era before Renault HiAce vans.



The hood is held at the rear by tacking the inner flap to the wooden tacking strip. The outer flap covers the tacks. Position the hood central to the bodywork with the sown seam flush with the top of the tack rail. Work outwards from the centre but do not tack beyond the curve each side. Do not hammer the tacks home tightly in case you need to make adjustments.

Secure the corners with Durable Dot snap fasteners. The static part should be screwed into the wooden tacking strip. (I found that screwing into the bodywork gave a better alignment)

Now with your assistant, pull the hood tightly over the windscreen. Check that it is central by measuring the positions of the 2 seams from the windscreen edges. Check that the fit over the sidescreens is reasonable. If the fit is poor some adjustment can be made by raising or lowering the rear hoop, or by adjusting the height of the tacked seam up or down a little. It is really a matter of trial and error until you are satisfied.

When the back and sides are correct, tack the front of the hood to the front of the wooden windscreen bow with upholstery tacks.

Trim the hood flush with the bottom of the front wooden rail, leaving enough at the sides to fold around as shown in figure 7.

The front of TA and TB hoods was finished with an aluminium moulding (Service part no. B269/148). It is more common nowadays to see the tacks concealed with hidem banding. The moulding or banding should run around the ends of the bow and be secured to the sides of the frame. 2 small holes are provided in the side frames. The standard banding finisher plates can be used if secured with a domed head machine screw. Many trimmers fit the finishers by pinning them to the end of the wooden bow. Period MG photographs are inconclusive as to which method is correct.

The final consideration is whether the hood should be permanently attached to the frame bows. The available data is confusing. The TA Instruction Manual states that the centre section should be pulled away from the hood sticks when stowing the hood and no section should be trapped between the sticks. The illustration that accompanies that text shows the hood clearly trapped between the sticks, presumably because it was riveted to the rear stick! The post war TC instruction book of 1954 shows the hood detached from the bows. I can only conclude that TA hoods were permanently attached, but MG were aware that it would damage the windows and the fabric of the hood and had written the Instruction Book text assuming a modification which didn't occur until the TC was produced.

I attached the hood to the rear bows with Durable Dot snap fasteners. At least it then looks like the pictures, but can be unbuttoned to avoid creasing the back windows when it is stowed. I had some difficulty modifying the button to go through the multiple thickness of hooding at that point. I couldn't find any Durable Dot fasteners with long rivets so I tapped a 4 BA thread in the button and used a screw to attach it to the snap fastener. The static part was secured to the hood bow with another BA screw and nut using the hole provided.

All that remains is to check that the hood is correctly tensioned, the frame straps are correctly located, the rear bow lines up with the Durable Dot snap fasteners, and it all still folds away neatly. Once you are satisfied tap all the pins home fully.

A Note about Storage

To store the hood, use the method in the TC manual.

Do not stow the hood when wet. Leave it up until completely dry. This will help to prevent shrinking.

The sidescreens will only fit in the stowage box one way. Place a front screen in upside-down with the frame outermost. Follow this with a rear screen upside-down, tilted, also with the frame outermost. Repeat for remaining sidescreens.

To stop the folded hood blowing up, MG originally supplied a tonneau cover that did just that. It was attached to the back of the seat by 3 elasticated straps, passed over the rail at the top of the seat, and was held to the body by 2 lift-a-dot fasteners at the rear and 2 at the side. The full length covers with a zip at the front were never supplied by MG. If you order a tonneau cover then it should not be manufactured in Duckcloth to match your hood. TAs and early TCs had Rexine tonneau covers. The nearest material available these days is leathercloth.



And there you have it.

You should now have a decent looking hood that is draughty and lets in rain just like an original. It will probably last a little longer than the original due to the very slight improvement in materials that has occurred in the intervening 60 years. You will also now know why there are a hearty handful of T type drivers who never put their hoods up in the rain. They are the ones, like me and you, who fitted their hoods themselves and don't want to ever have to do the job again