

# E90 Window Trim Painting DIY



Warning: Execute this DIY guide AT YOUR OWN RISK. I am not to be held responsible for any damages you incur while attempting this modification.

By: fdriller9  
E90post.com

Let me start off by saying that this mod is easy to do but requires patience and gentle hands. The most difficult part is removing the door sill seals. The door sill trim actually consists of 2 parts: the trim and the seal that the trim attaches to. The seal contains a metal strip inside that is easily bendable and hard to reform once bent. However, in order to reattach the trim you need to remove this seal which, while removing, gets slightly bent. You also need to remove the front door panels and side view mirrors in order to re-install the door sill trim. This DIY can be done alone but having an extra set of hands can be helpful in some situations.

Okay, so on with the DIY. The materials list is very short. Here is what you'll need:

- Small Flat-head Screw Driver
- T-20 and T-30 Torx bit Screw Drivers (Make sure they have at least a 4-inch shaft. I had to buy an extension.)
- Some sandpaper (Medium grit should be fine)
- Primer
- Matte or Gloss Black Paint
- Matte or Gloss Clear Coat
- Blue Painter's Tape
- Old credit card or something similar



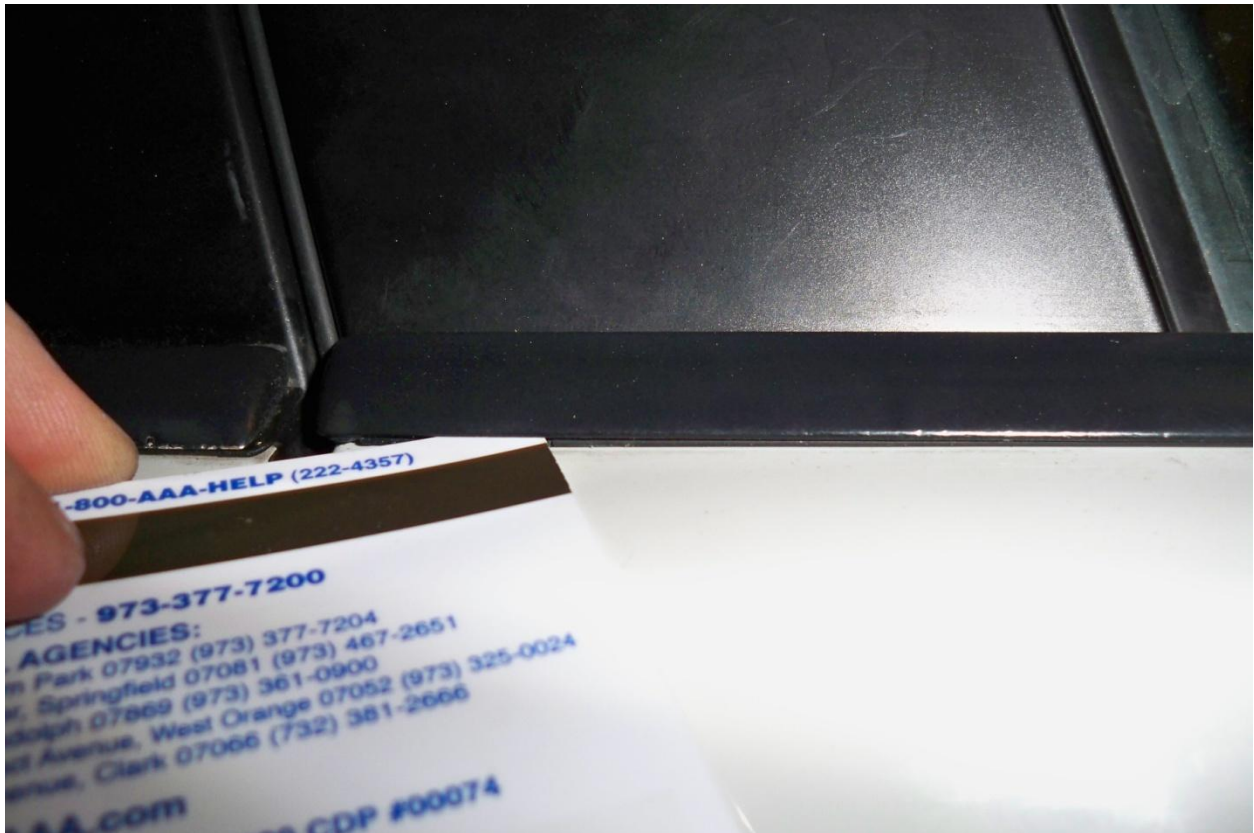
\* Another option is plasti-dip if you would like to return the trim back to stock at some point. Using this method would not require sanding, priming, or clear coating. However you can only achieve a matte black look.

## Removing the Upper Trim

Start by removing the rear section of the upper trim. The upper trim is held in by clips, so just wedge your fingers behind the trim and pull toward you. Don't worry about breaking a couple clips. There are quite a few. Also, you'll notice that some clips will come off with the trim and others will remain attached to the car. You do not need to remove the clips from the car or the trim. They will snap back in either way.

## Removing the Door Sill (Lower) Trim

To remove the door sill trim, start off by taping along the trim with the blue painter's tape. Then using a credit card or something similar, run it under the trim but above the seal (Refer to picture below). As you know, the front trim sits under the side view mirrors, but don't worry. Remove the trim with the same method you used to remove the rear door sill trim. The trim will pop out because there is enough clearance.



NOTE: You can see that, by my finger in the picture above, the paint is not fully covering the trim. I did not notice this before I re-installed the trim. I was too lazy to take it off again and re-spray it because it is hardly noticeable. Your finished product should look great if you inspect it before hand.

## **Priming, Painting, and Clear Coating**

Now that you have all the trim pieces removed, lightly sand the pieces to create a good surface for the primer to adhere to. Then, clean the pieces with some water or rubbing alcohol. Next, you want to tape off the rubber seal found on the rear of the upper trim. You can also tape off the black piece found on the other end (Front) of the upper trim. However this is not necessary, as it is not used for any sealing purposes. Now you are ready to prime. You want to do this in a well ventilated but enclosed area. I used my garage with the door open about a ½ a foot from the ground. If you're doing this in your garage, lay down some newspaper to protect the floor. Make sure you cover an area that is at least 4 times the size of the trim. I laid down too little and over-sprayed my expensive garage floor. I spent about an hour rubbing the floor with acetone to get it off. You can also wet the floor with some water. Wetting the floor helps keep dust particles from floating around. Next, lay your pieces down on the paper making sure the door sill pieces are as level as possible. Small pieces of cardboard help in leveling the door sill trim pieces.

Now spray the primer on in thin, light coats. Wait about a half hour and spray another coat on. Wait at least an hour before painting! After letting the primer dry for at least an hour, you can begin to spray your choice of matte or gloss black paint onto the trim. Again, spray thin, light coats. Follow the same drying times used for priming. Clear coating is the same as well but I did 3 coats instead of 2. Now this is where you need to be patient!! I can't stress this enough. You **NEED** to let the pieces dry for at least, the absolute minimum, 12 hours. 12 HOURS. If you rush, the paint will be soft when you push it back onto the car and you will leave your finger prints on it **PERMANENTLY**.

## Re-installation of the Trim

### Upper Trim

Re-installing the upper trim is easy. Just line up the clips and snap it back into place.

### Rear Door Sill Seal Removal

To re-install the door sill trim, you need to remove the seal mentioned in the beginning of this DIY. To remove the rear door seal, use a small flat-head screw driver to gently lift the seal. Start at the front of the rear door and lift the seal with the screw driver just enough so that you can grab it with your fingers.



You want to insert the flat-head screw driver into the indicated spot and gently pry the seal up.  
NOTE: Read on first before prying the whole seal out!



NOTE: As you can see my driver's side, rear door (First picture with red circle) had the small plastic piece missing. The door should really look like the photo above.



Next, pull the seal toward the front of the car and SLOWLY lift up. Most of the trim will need to be pulled up from the groove, but the pulling motion should slide the last few inches out, so watch your footing! You don't want to fall backwards. Now that the seal is out, you'll notice that it is bent. You need to grab both ends in a fist and pull in opposite directions. While pulling, bend the seal back into a straight position with your thumbs. Be careful! The seal will bend sideways if you force it too much. As long as the seal isn't terribly bent, you won't have a problem pushing it back in with the trim piece attached. Just make sure that the bottom groove is somewhat straight. I didn't think of this at the time, but maybe putting a metal piece inside the bottom groove will help prevent any (sideways) bending. Let me know if this works.

### Front Door Sill Seal Removal

To remove the front door sill seals, you need to remove the side view mirrors. Removing the mirrors also requires the removal of the door panels. Start by removing the interior accent trim. You must start from the rear of the door. The front has a hook that is stationary and cannot be pried out. The accent trim is fastened firmly to the door. A good amount of force is required to remove it. The passenger side door, pictured below, has a vertical hand grip that is not part of the driver's side door. You need to remove this cover by gently prying from the bottom toward you.



After you have removed the accent trim and hand grip cover from the passenger door, there are 4 T-20 torx bit screws, indicated in red above, that need to be removed. The driver's side door only has 3, located in the same positions above. Now that the torx screws have been removed, the door panel can be pried off the sheet metal. Start at the lower, rear section of the door. You can use the flat-head screw driver to pry it out; just make sure to protect the paint with some tape or a

cloth. Loosen 2 or 3 clips and then you can just pull off the panel from the sheet metal. This is where 2 people come in handy. I did this DIY by myself and broke the window switch (about \$40 on realoem.com) because I dropped the panel. Have one person hold the door while another disconnects a total of 4 wires; 2 from the speaker, 1 from the window switch, and 1 from the light under the door. I found it easier to remove the light from the door to disconnect the wire. I'm not sure how to remove the window switch wire on the passenger side (because it popped out and broke when I dropped the panel) but the driver's side is a lever that you just push back and the harness comes right out.



From Speaker

From Light

From Window Switch (Remember the driver's side has a lever.)

Now, you must remove the black trim surrounding the upper portion of the door. Start by pulling on the tweeter toward you, then down. Remove the trim until you get to the upper right corner. Then start removing the opposite side with the same method. Now you can remove the trim from the corner by taking either end and pulling up. This motion should free the trim.



NOTE: To re-install this trim, you need to line it up in the corner and then push the trim back in. Make sure you don't crush any seals on both the interior and exterior of the door. I started by lining up the trim on the outer section of the door and then pulled the trim over the inner seals. You'll also notice that the seal on the outside corner will be under the trim. Just take the flat-head screwdriver and gently pry it out, over the trim.

After removing the black trim, you now have access to the 3, T-30 torx bit screws that are used to secure the side view mirror. Refer to the picture below.



Disconnect the side view mirror wire by squeezing the 2 tabs on the top and bottom of the plug.





You can now remove the door sill seals with the same method described before. However, there are clips on the front portion of the seals. Just pull the clip forward and slip it over the edge.

### Front and Rear Door Sill Seal and Trim Installation

The trim pieces have an angled notch on the underside that fit into the groove on the top of the seal. The angle is somewhat difficult to work with, but a little wiggling should snap the two together. Make sure you attach the correct trim pieces with their respective seals. All you have to do now is push the seal back into the groove it came out of. Make sure both ends of the trim are attached while your pushing the seal back in. It tends to separate as you push it in, so just watch the whole length of the trim as you're pushing it back in.

### **Re-installing the Door Panels**

Just reverse the steps explained before. Refer to the note mentioned above for re-installing the black window trim.

Now sit back, crack open a beer, and admire your new \$20 window trim!