

Steering Column Services

GM (Saginaw) Shift Lever Spring Replacement

These instructions will show you how to replace the shift lever spring in a column shift tilt (or non-tilt) steering column build by Saginaw between the years 1969 and 1994 (additional years may apply).

When the shift lever becomes loose, it may flop between the steering wheel and dash without any tension. Most likely the cause is a broken shift lever return spring.



This spring is mounted in the shift bowl and forces the lever to both return when pulled by the driver and engage the respective detent positions when shifted into the respective gears (PRNDL).

We are using a bare shift bowl (off the vehicle) for illustration purposes only. This job can be completed on the column without removing the column or any other parts aside from those described in these instructions.



1. Remove the original shift lever by simply pushing the pivot pin out of the bowl. A small punch or similar tool may be used. Gently tap it upward with a hammer and the pin will come up and out.



2. Pull the shift lever away and out of the column.

Look inside the lever hole and locate the shift return spring.

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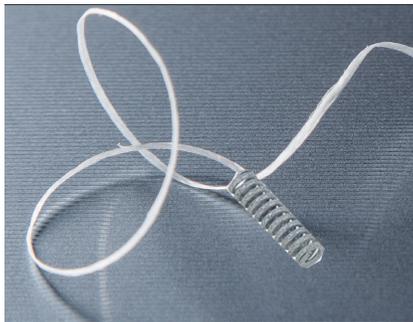


3. With a small flat blade screwdriver, firmly pry the spring out of the seat and towards the driver. If will fall out into the shift bowl and/or onto the floor (maybe not now, but ultimately it will drop out)



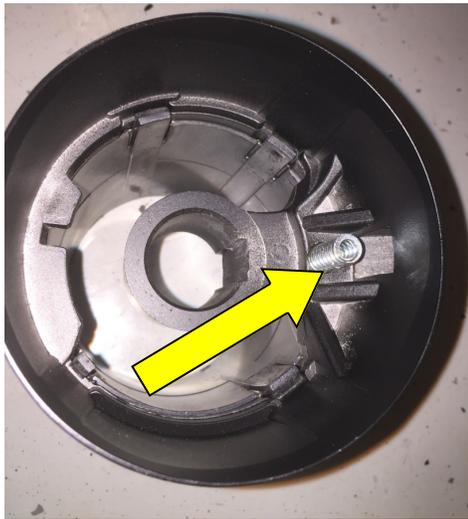
Removal is now complete.

INSTALLATION PROCEDURE



4. Tie a piece of dental floss to the new spring. On occasion (most of the time), it will fall during installation. This way, you can pull it back up to attempt installation again.

ROTATE THE SHIFT BOWL BY HAND TO THE NEUTRAL POSITION.



We have illustrated a top view of the shift bowl in the “Neutral” position to show you where and how the spring seats into the bowl.



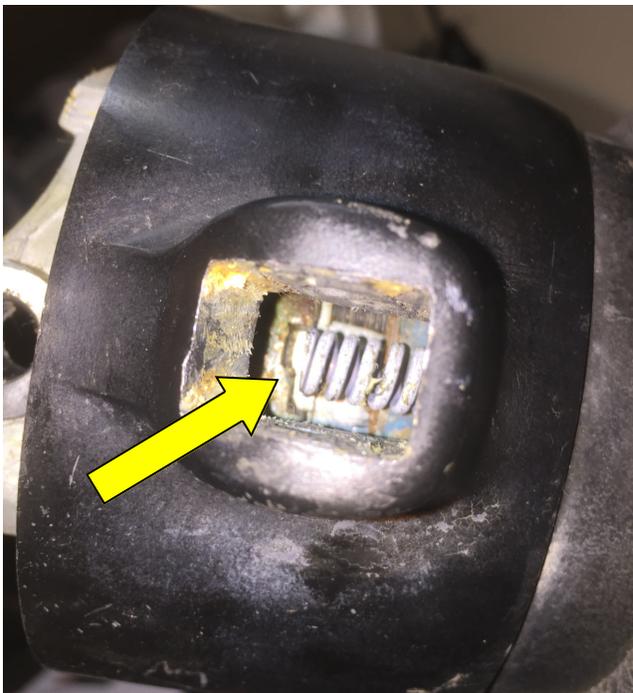
5. Using a curl pick, maneuver the spring into the shift lever hole and down into the seat of the shift bowl.





6. Once you feel the spring is partially seated in the bowl, using a flat blade screwdriver, firmly pry the spring **FARTHER** into the seat. Once fully seated, it should be fairly tight in position.

Do not force it too hard or the spring will bounce out of the seat. Using minimal pressure, just try to get the spring deep enough to stay in place by itself.



7. Look into the hole and determine the spacing between the new shift return spring and the opening available to insert the shift lever. It should look like this.

Notice, you can see the end of the spring is below the detent position farther in the column where the tip of the shift lever will ride.



8. Install the shift lever at such an angle so the tip does not dislodge the spring, but slides above the spring tip and deep into the space for the tip to engage the detent plate.



9. Once fully inserted, align the holes for the pin by compressing the shift spring with the lever (towards the dash)

10. Install the pin and tap it into place gently.



11. Check the shifter and the lever return tension by shifting to all the shift positions.