

Auto Repair Guide

6



How to Change a
Headlight or Tail Light

How to Fix a Burned Out Headlight

Edit Article

Three Methods: ■ Removing a Blown Out Headlight ■ Installing a New Bulb
■ Replacing Sealed Beam Style Headlights ● Community Q&A

Vehicle headlights are designed to withstand major changes in humidity, temperature and vibrations, but they still burn out and need to be replaced on occasion. Blown out headlights can be swapped out at home, often without the use of any tools whatsoever. Your headlights are integral to driving safely, so replace a blown out headlight as soon as you identify it.

Method
1

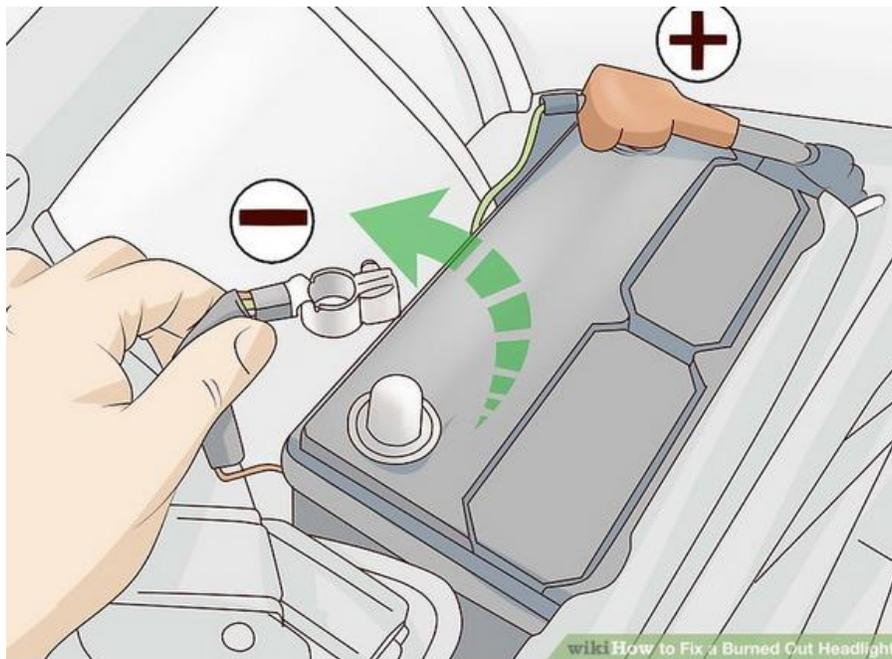
Removing a Blown Out Headlight

Edit



1 **Open the hood.** You will need to access the headlight from the back. In most vehicles, that requires opening the hood. Find the hood release switch near the door frame on the driver's side of the vehicle. Pull the release backward to release the hood.^[1]

- You will have to release the safety latch on the front of the vehicle to open the hood the rest of the way.
- If you are unsure where to find the safety latch, refer to the owner's manual for your vehicle.



2 Disconnect the battery. Before starting any work on the electrical system of your vehicle, you should always disconnect the battery. Locate the battery in your vehicle and use a hand or socket wrench to loosen the nut on the negative terminal. With the nut loose, pull the cable up and off the terminal and tuck it to the side of the battery to prevent it from coming back into contact with the terminal.^[2]

- Locate the negative terminal by looking for the letters "NEG" or the negative (-) symbol.
- You will not need to disconnect the positive terminal.



3 Remove any trim components necessary to access the headlight. In many modern vehicles, you will need to remove engine covers or plastic trim components in order to access the back of the headlight. Be careful removing plastic clips that hold trim pieces in place, as they may be brittle and prone to cracking or breaking.^[3]

- You can usually purchase replacement clips at your local auto parts store if you break one.
- Refer to the service manual for your vehicle for specific instructions on how to access your headlight.



4 **Unplug the headlight wire pigtail.** Press down on the plastic release clip on the wire pigtail going into the back of the headlight. Maintain pressure on the release as you pull the clip backward to disconnect it.^[4]

- Do not pull on the wiring itself or you may accidentally remove them from the pigtail.
- Inspect the inside of the pigtail for damage. If there are signs of burning or melting, there may be an issue with your vehicle's electrical system.



5 **Twist the headlight and pull it backward to remove it.** Rotate the back of the headlight bulb counter clockwise to release it from the plastic headlight housing. Remove the bulb by sliding it back out of the plastic housing. In some applications, the bulb will be held in a plastic assembly and will need to be pulled out to be replaced.^[5]

- Refer to the service manual for your specific vehicle if it is not easy to assess how to remove the bulb.



1 Purchase a replacement bulb. New headlight bulbs can be purchased at many large retail or auto parts stores. Be sure to provide the year, make and model of the vehicle to the clerk to receive the correct replacement bulb.^[6]

- You may want to replace both headlight bulbs at once to ensure they offer the same level of brightness.
- You can also look up the bulb part number on the automaker's website.



2 Remove the bulb from the package without touching it. The oil on your hands can damage the bulb of most modern headlights, so it's important that you make every effort not to touch the glass of the bulb with your fingers as you remove it from the package. Hold the bulb by the base if possible.^[7]

- Wearing gloves can also protect the bulb.



3 Wipe down the bulb with rubbing alcohol. If you do touch the glass of the headlight bulb, pour some rubbing alcohol on a rag and wipe the bulb down. This will remove the oils from your skin and prolong the life of the bulb.^[8]

- Be sure to wipe the bulb dry after cleaning it.
- Holding the bulb with the rag will prevent you from touching it again.



4 Insert the bulb into the headlight housing. Slide the bulb into the plastic assembly (if equipped) and then insert the bulb and assembly into the headlight housing. Twist the bulb clockwise to lock it into place within the headlight housing.^[9]

- You usually need to turn the bulb a quarter turn to secure it into place.
- Be careful not to bang the bulb on things as you insert it.



5 **Connect the headlight wire pigtail.** Clip the wire pigtail to the backside of the bulb. Be sure it seats evenly with the connection. When the pigtail is connected properly, you will hear an audible click as the plastic releases latch into place.^[10]

- If the pigtail is dirty, spray it with electrical component cleaner before reconnecting it.
- You can buy electrical cleaner at most electronics or auto parts stores.



6 **Replace any trim pieces you removed.** With the new bulb in place, return any components of the trim you needed to remove to access it. Put each piece back on in the reverse order you removed them, as some pieces may overlap.^[11]

- Reconnect the battery and test the new headlights to ensure they work.
- Repeat this process on the other side if you are replacing both lights.



1 Remove the trim around the headlamp. Sealed beam style headlights were common in older model vehicles. These headlights are entirely self-contained and tend to be three to five inches in diameter. Because these headlights need to be pulled out, start by removing any parts of the vehicle's exterior trim that surrounds the headlights.^[12]

- You may not need to remove any trim components depending on the application.



2 Remove portions of the grill if necessary. In some trucks, you will need to remove all or parts of the grill in order to access the headlight screws and connections. Refer to the service manual for your specific vehicle to determine what parts, if any, of the grill you'll need to remove.^[13]

- If you need to remove the grill, it is usually secured with bolts along the top and a series of clips.
- You will need to gain access to the screws that hold the headlight in place. Remove anything you need to in order to reach them.



3 **Unscrew the ring that holds the light in place.** Sealed beam style headlights are commonly held in place by a metal or plastic ring that is secured with multiple screws or bolts. Use the appropriate hand tool (screw driver or wrench) to remove each of these fasteners and set them aside somewhere safe.^[14]

- You will need to reuse the fasteners, so be careful not to lose them.
- If any of the bolts or screws are severely rusted or damaged, be sure to replace them.



4 **Pull the headlight out toward you and disconnect the wiring.** With the ring removed, grip the headlight with your thumbs and fore fingers and pull it toward you, out of the front of the vehicle. Once the headlight slides out, disconnect the wiring going into the back of it.^[15]

- Depending on the vehicle, there may be a wire pigtail with plastic releases you will need to squeeze to release.
- Inspect the disconnected wiring for damage.



5 Connect the new light and slide it into place. Remove the new light from the package and connect the loose wiring you removed from the previous light. Slide the headlight into place where the old one sat and hold it in place until you can replace the ring that secures it.^[16]

- If the wiring connectors are dirty, spray them with electrical cleaner.
- You can purchase electrical cleaner from your local auto parts or electronics store.



6 Screw the ring back into place. Place the metal or plastic ring back over the headlight and use the fasteners you saved to secure it into place. Once done, return any pieces of the trim or grill you needed to remove.^[17]

- Start the vehicle to test the headlight.
- If the headlight does not work, check to ensure the wiring is securely connected and free of damage.

How to Fix Car Tail Lights



Two Parts: ■ [Assessing the Problem](#) ■ [Using a Lens Repair Kit](#) [Community Q&A](#)

If your tail lights are broken or not illuminating, don't take your car to the mechanic! For a straightforward light or fuse replacement, you can fix your tail lights yourself for a fraction of the price. You can be cited by a traffic officer if your car tail lights are not illuminating or broken, so don't waste any time. Read on to learn how to fix your car tail lights.

Part 1

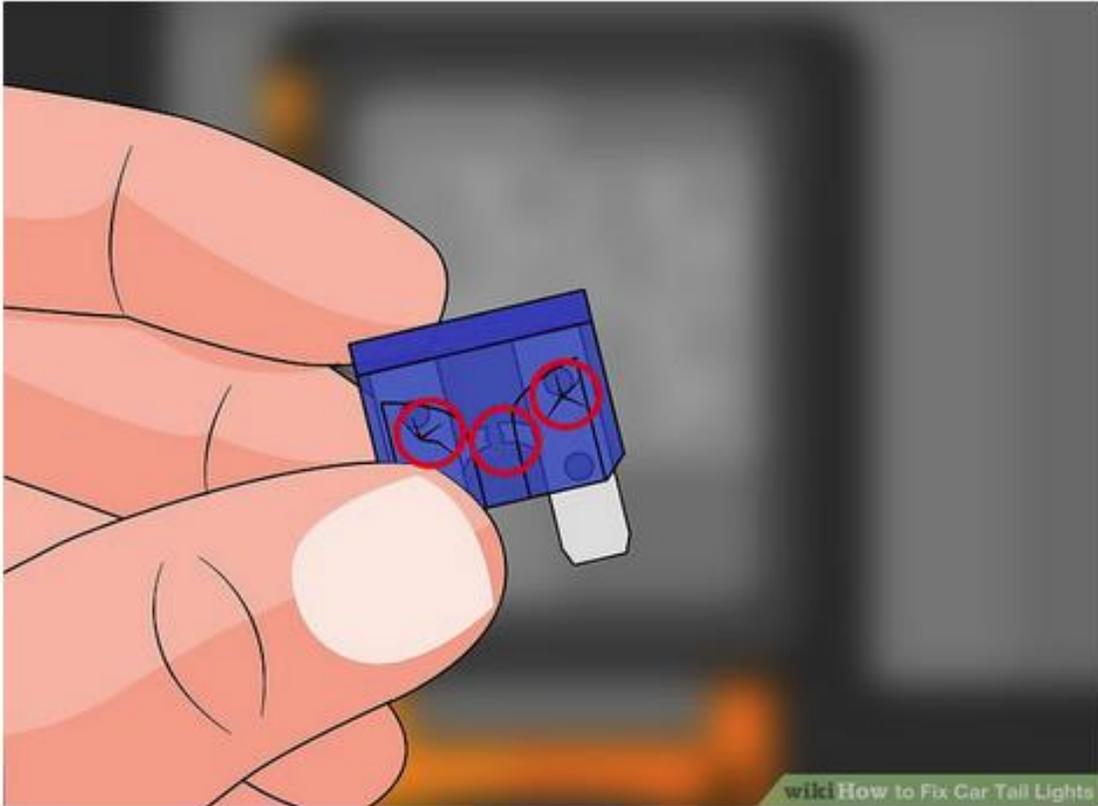
Assessing the Problem

[Edit](#)



- 1 Check the fuse.** A blown fuse usually causes both lights to go out. On newer cars, the tail lamps can be fused separately and/or each bulb or shared circuit can be fused. A fuse can be blown due to other problems, so you'll need to check more than just the fuse, but it's the right place to start. Look in your owner's manual to determine where the fuse box is located in your car. On older cars, the fuse box is located under the dash. On most newer cars it can be located under the hood or the dash. The manual will have a labeled picture of the fuse box showing which fuse is which. Making sure the ignition is off, take the cover off of the fuse box and locate the taillight fuse. Use a flashlight to inspect the fuse and determine whether it's blown. On most new cars, the fuse would have to be removed to be checked due to the arrangement of the fuses.

- If the piece of metal inside the taillight fuse is intact, the fuse is still good.



- If the piece of metal looks broken or fractured, the fuse is blown and will need replacing. Use your fingers or a tweezer to take out the fuse. Most new cars have a fuse extractor in the fuse box or in the tool kit. It is a small white plastic tool that resembles a pair of pliers. Bring it to an auto store to find a match, then buy a replacement and insert it in the proper position to replace the blown fuse.





2 Look at the tail lamp wiring. These are the wires that lead to the tail lights, located inside the lid of the trunk. Open the trunk and take a look. You can see where the wires should connect in order for the electrical system to properly work. If a wire has come loose, reattach it.

- On most new cars, the wiring harness is located behind panels in the trunk and is not accessible without removing the panels.



3 Check the taillight bulbs. If the fuse and wiring look right, the bulbs themselves might be the problem. To check them, unscrew the taillight lenses from the outside using a screwdriver. If your lenses don't have screws, open the trunk so you can access the lights from the inside. Unscrew the bulbs in question and check them the way you would any household bulb: by looking at the filament wire inside them to determine if it is still intact. The bulb can be checked by tapping it against your hand to see if the filament is moving or vibrating.

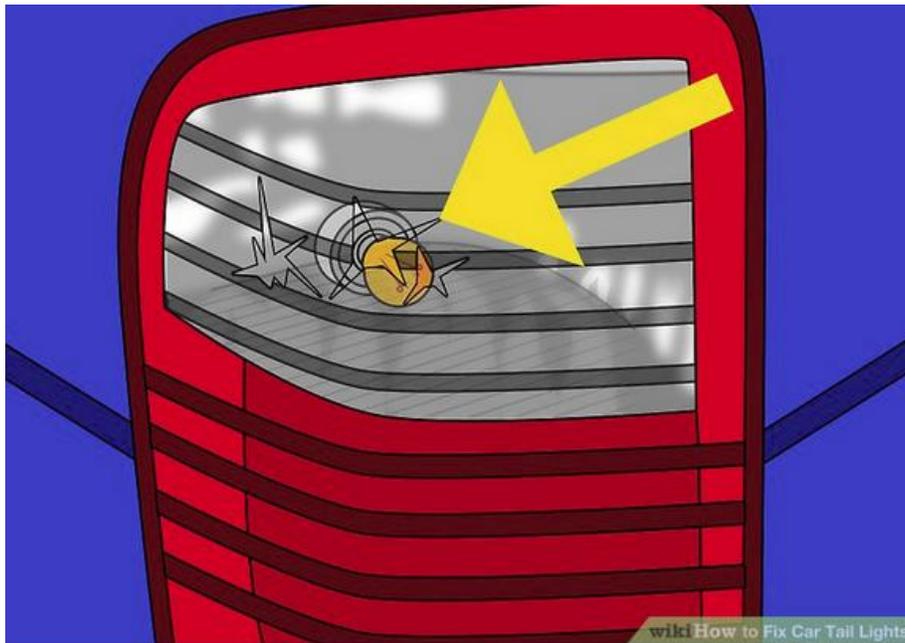
- Most tail lamps have stop lamp/turn indicator bulb(s), reverse lamp bulb, tail lamp bulbs, side marker bulb, and on some models a self standing indicator bulb. On cars where the brake and turn signal are sharing a bulb, when the bulb is burnt out, the turn signal indicator will flash faster than normal. This will apply also if the vehicle has a burnt out turn signal bulb in the rear amber turn indicator.
- If the bulb is burnt out, you'll need to replace it. Take it to your local auto store and buy the correct model for your car.



- If the bulb is fine, your car may have a deeper electrical problem. If the fuse, taillight wires, and bulb are all in good shape, it's time to take the car to the mechanic.



- When you remove a bulb for replacement, you should inspect the socket for burnt contacts and the tail lamp for burnt contacts or melted socket boards.



4 Check the taillight lenses. Whether or not you were able to fix the problem of your tail lights working correctly by examining the fuse, wiring and light bulb, it's important to check the lenses as well to make sure they're not cracked or broken. Water entering the lens can burn out a bulb. Keep reading to learn how to repair a broken or cracked lens.

Part
2

Using a Lens Repair Kit

Edit



1 Remove the taillight lens.

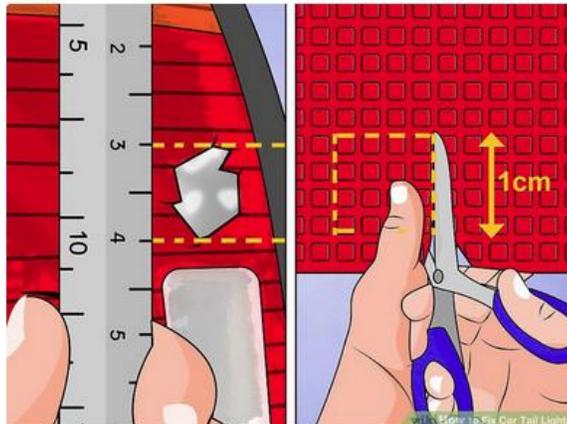


2 Repair lens cracks with lens repair tape. Using tape is meant to only be a temporary fix. You purchase tape or buy a lens repair kit that comes with resin that you simply place over the crack to make it waterproof again.

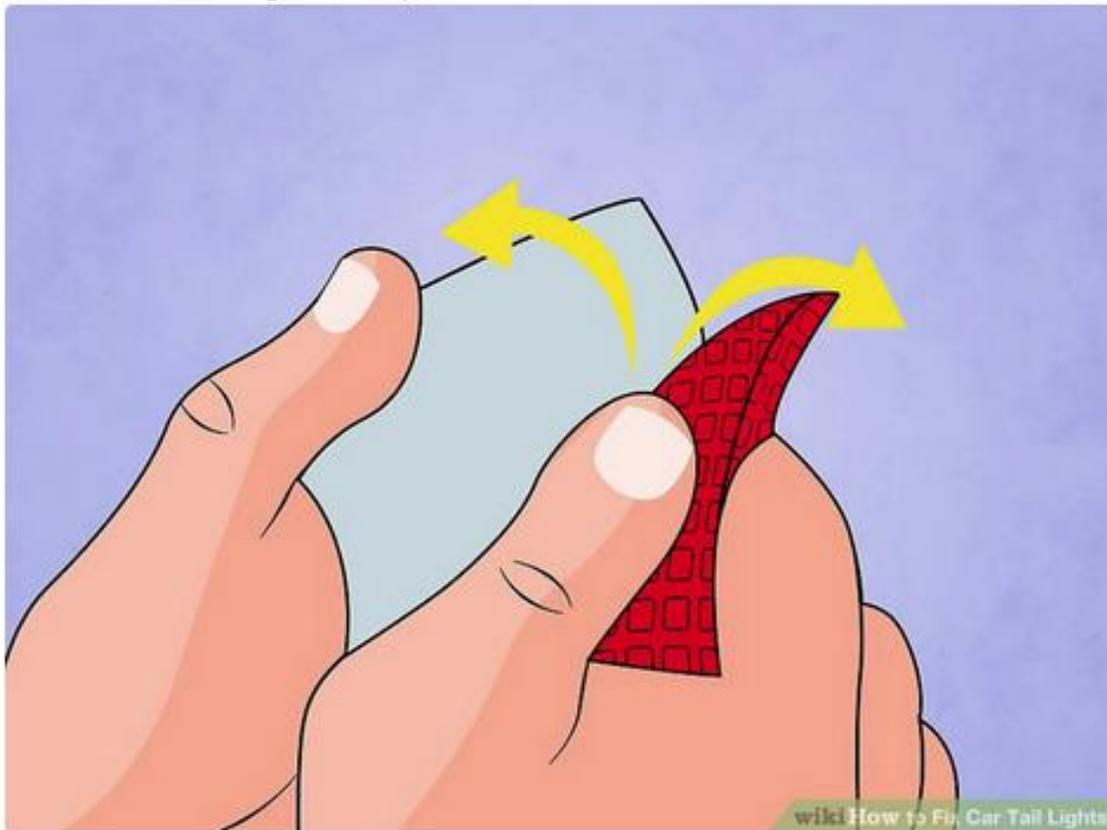
- You want to clean and dry the area where the tape is to be applied. Just before adding the tape wipe the area with a lint free cloth that is wet with rubbing alcohol, and let it dry, then apply the tape. Do not use glass cleaner to clean the area because the ammonia in the glass cleaner will cause the tape not to stick as well as it should. The last wipe with rubbing alcohol will remove most of the impurities and leave a clean surface.



- Measure the size of the crack and cut the tape slightly larger than the damage of the lens.



- Remove the backing of the tape.



- Smooth out the air bubbles when you apply the tape, so they don't distort the lens.





3 Repair holes and broken spots with lens repair resin. If there's a gouge or broken spot, you can fill in the hole with plastic resin. Buy a lens repair kit that comes with supplies for filling in the holes. ^[1]

- Cover the outside of the taillight with the plastic tape that comes with the repair kit, to prevent the plastic resin from leaking through.



- Mix the resin with a catalyst and coloring agent according to the instructions included in the kit. Wear a pair of disposable gloves during this part of the process to avoid getting resin on your skin.

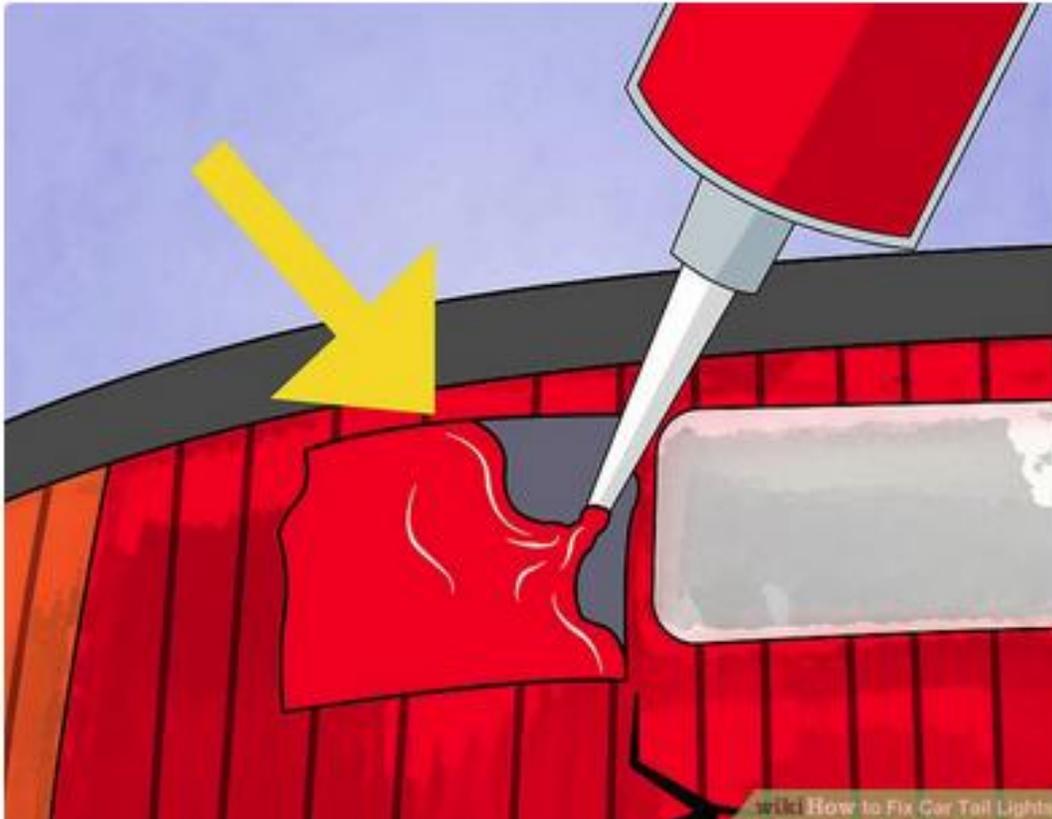


- Pour the resin into the provided syringe.



- Squirt the resin into the hole, making sure it covers the entire area that needs to be filled.

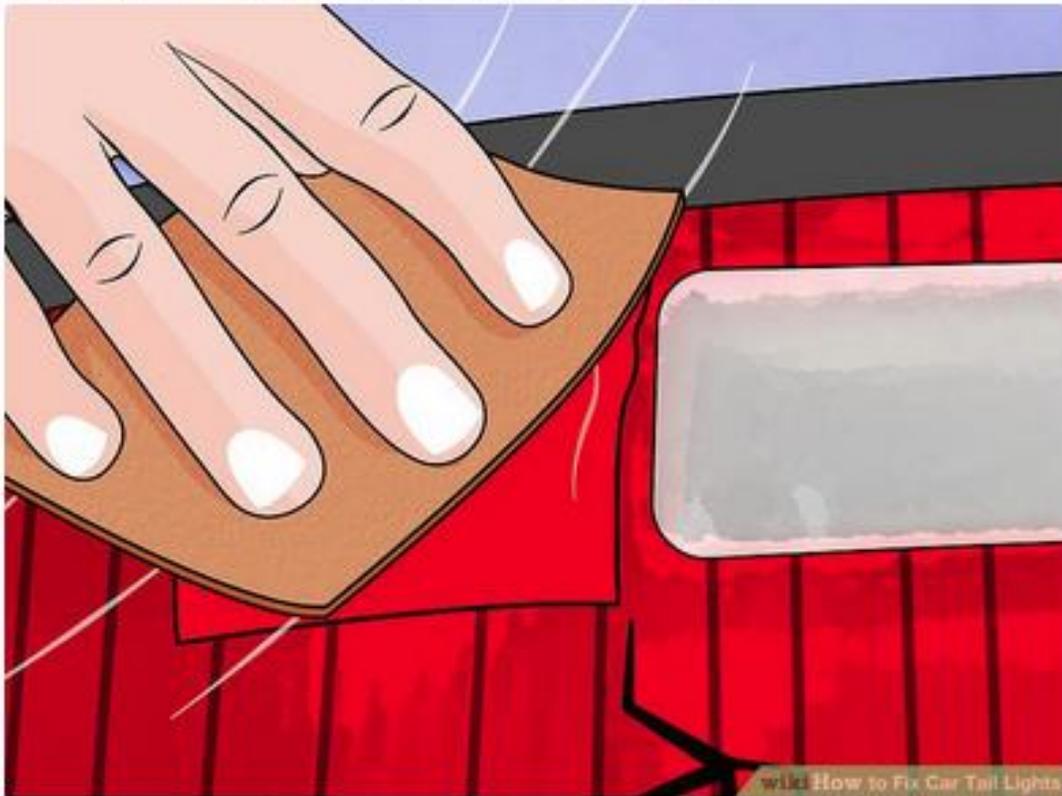
- Squirt the resin into the hole, making sure it covers the entire area that needs to be filled.



- Let it cure for at least 2 hours.



- Remove the tape and sand the surface to smooth it out.



- It is also best to know how to replace burnt out tail lights all by yourself. This is a very simple task as described in the steps above. Knowing how to replace burnt out tail lights can save you from expensive car lighting maintenance.
- So the next time you encountered problem with your car tail lights, you can easily solve the matter by doing the replacement yourself. Good and well functioning car tail lights will ensure that you can drive safely on highways and you can avoid unfortunate accidents.
- Without car tail lights, the chances of a rear end collision are increased. Some pile ups happen because of faulty car tail lights. They are very important also especially during weather disturbances that affect road visibility.
- To avoid future traffic citations, make sure that your car tail lights are always in prime condition. The life span of tail lights usually last for several years. But it would be best to perform a thorough check on it annually or once every two years. In this way, you can ensure that your tail lights will always perform.
- That is why traffic and highway officers are very particular about the condition of your tail lights. They are very quick to note burnt out car tail lights because it has serious consequences on road safety.
- It is also good to purchase reserve tail light bulbs and extra cover. This way, you will not have to run to the auto shop whenever your taillight becomes burnt out. Some tail lights bulb may also be very difficult to find so it would be best to have lots of spare bulbs and tail lights cover.
- If the tail lights are working perfectly, you can now go to the station and report that you have fixed your taillight. This is a required procedure in order to nullify the traffic citation.
- On some modern cars, the tail lamps have LEDs instead of regular bulbs. Some tail lamps with LEDs are not serviceable and will need to have the whole tail lamp assembly replaced.
- Car tail lights are important safety feature of a vehicle. It convey important signals to other drivers behind you especially if you are slowing down, are about to make a stop, making a turn or are driving at night.

Source Link: <https://www.wikihow.com/Fix-Car-Tail-Lights>