

TECH TIPS No28a
CHECKS TO BE MADE BEFORE CHANGING THE
HANDBRAKE CABLE

This is the most difficult cable to replace.

Before you think of changing this cable it will save you a lot of time to check various items. NOTE. This is a time consuming job. Do not expect to do this job in day.

I have found 500 owners who have decided to change the cable because they cannot achieve the three notches required by the MOT and all the adjustment is on max. They think they have done everything, but here are a few items to check, to find and clear the fault before you make the big decision whether to fit a new cable.

First jack up the car, put stands under the chassis; this will allow the rear suspension to be lower to give you better access.

1. Check your brake shoes.

1a. This is an easy one to clear, just go and buy new brake shoes with automatic adjusters already fitted.

The blind bush on the automatic adjusters can wear and so can steady post, which is attached to the brake housing back plate.

1b. See if there is excessive play between the brake shoe adjuster and the steady post. There should be a clearance this is to allow the shoe lining to retract away from the drum, when you lift your foot off the brake pedal. If there is excessive clearance, the post can be built up with weld or braze and then fitted to the required clearance.

2. Check the adjuster that is attached to rear suspension on the near side (NS) and the off side (OS) of the car.

Note: - To work on the adjusters, you need loosen the inner cable. Therefore you have to go into the car, remove the access cover in front of the rear seat, take the hand brake off the tunnel by removing the four 8mm bolts. Take off the compensating wheel plus the inner cable off the hand brake.

2a. Say we start on the (NS). When you look for the adjuster, many times it can't be seen because of all the dried mud and rust. So the first thing to do; is get a face mask and a wire brush, hand or powered and clean the whole of the area, when it is clean it should look something like sketch below.

2c. Spray the adjuster with WD40 and leave to penetrate.

2d. With a 17mm spanner on the adjuster bolt head and 19mm spanner on the front nut try and unscrew a 1/2 turn. If completed, put a 17mm spanner on the adjuster bolt head and turn at the same time wire brushing the threads until clean, spray with WD40. Unscrew the front nut off completely.

2c. If the adjuster is seized. Jamb a wedge or old screw driver between front nut and the suspension arm and hit the nut using a hammer and large punch. Hit the nut a number of times and then try and turn again, carry on doing this until you get half a turn (what you are doing is stretching the nut, making it slightly bigger so that it will turn) then proceed as per 2c.

2d. Pull the bolt back until the inner cable can slip through the slot on the bracket.

2e. Now proceed and do the (OS). As per 2a. to 2d.

3. Checking the condition of the inner cable.

3a. Now the inner cable is free of the adjusters. The inner cable can now be checked.

3b. Disconnect the inner cable from the brake drum lever on NS and OS of the car, by removing the split-pin and washer.

3c. Pull the inner cable towards you until it stops. If you have been able to do this, therefore the inner is not jamming in the outer. Now do the other side.

3d. Check the inner cable for any breaks from the outer to the return spring. Now this is the only time you would change the brake cable if it is seized or badly frayed.

4. Check the condition of the lever arm.

Check the condition of the 'V' on the actuator lever and push bar between shoes. You will find a lot of wear in the 'V' so much so a 1mm wear will move the dimension 'x' on actuator lever by 7mm.

This wear can be adjusted by putting a small amount of weld in the 'V' and then file and fit until the lever is in the correct position as per actuator lever position.1. This will also clear the brake drum wear

Note. In the workshop manuals they show a small spring running from the lever arm (on the 500 only) to a small bracket attached to the back plate, they call it a **Lever Return Spring**. Wrong! It is not strong enough to do any thing like that, what it is for is an anti rattle spring and every brake lever should have one. Any weak spring will do you can buy them at car shop.

If you have been running without the anti rattle spring you will find a lot of wear on hinge pin and in the 'V' of the levers.

Conclusions

If the inner cable is frayed, then a new cable will have to be fitted.

If the inner cable is in good condition, give the inner cable a good coating of grease.

On the adjusters' coat with copper grease, run the nut up and down the thread making sure everything is coated. When the brake is finally adjusted coat the whole of the adjuster with grease for protection. This will save you a lot of time when you have to adjust the hand brake the next time.

This tech tips to be read with info in tech tips no 11.

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