

HOW TO REPLACE THE SPOILER ON YOUR GEN 3 PRIUS

Yup, it happened. The spoiler on your beloved Prius has departed this earth and now is in the great junkyard in the sky. This is how you make it all better so the pain goes away.....

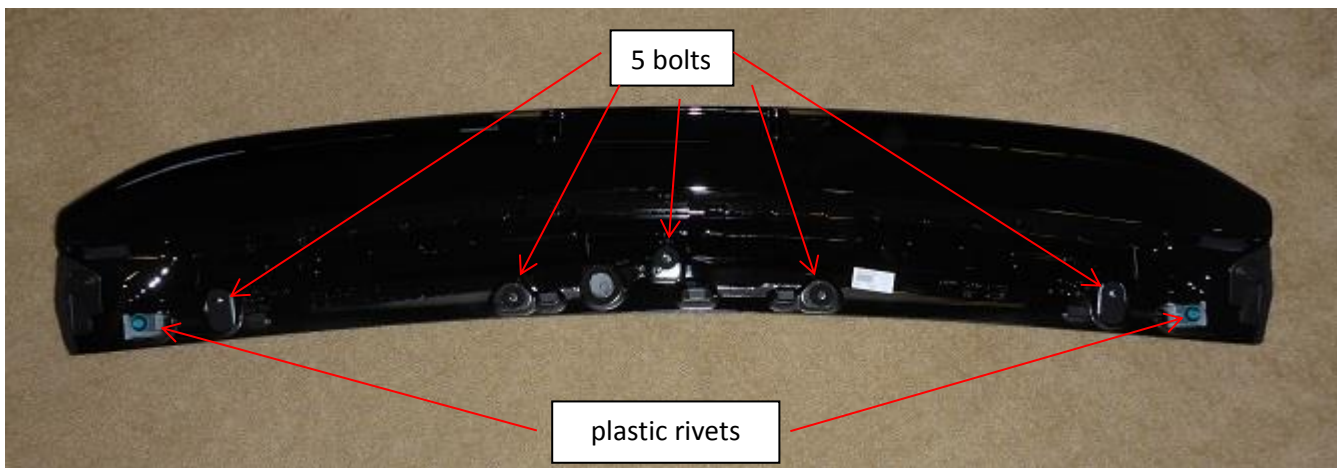
What do you need? You'll need a plastic prying tool, a 10mm socket wrench, a phillips screwdriver, something to fish wire with (pipe cleaner or wire clothes hanger will do), and a shiny new spoiler.

Can you do it? How long will it take? Just about anyone could do this job. On a scale of 1 to 10 in difficulty, I'd rate it about a 5. I am mechanically inclined, but not terribly so. It took me about 1 ½ hours, and I was taking pictures along the way.

Where do you get the spoiler? I got mine at AutoNation Gulf Freeway. It was the cheapest I could find. It cost me \$320.08 including taxes, shipping, and handling. It is part #76085-47910. When you look at the part on their website, it shows a list of the Prius that it will fit. Mine was a 2012 Prius Plug-in, but it looks like it fit all the Gen 3 Prius models.

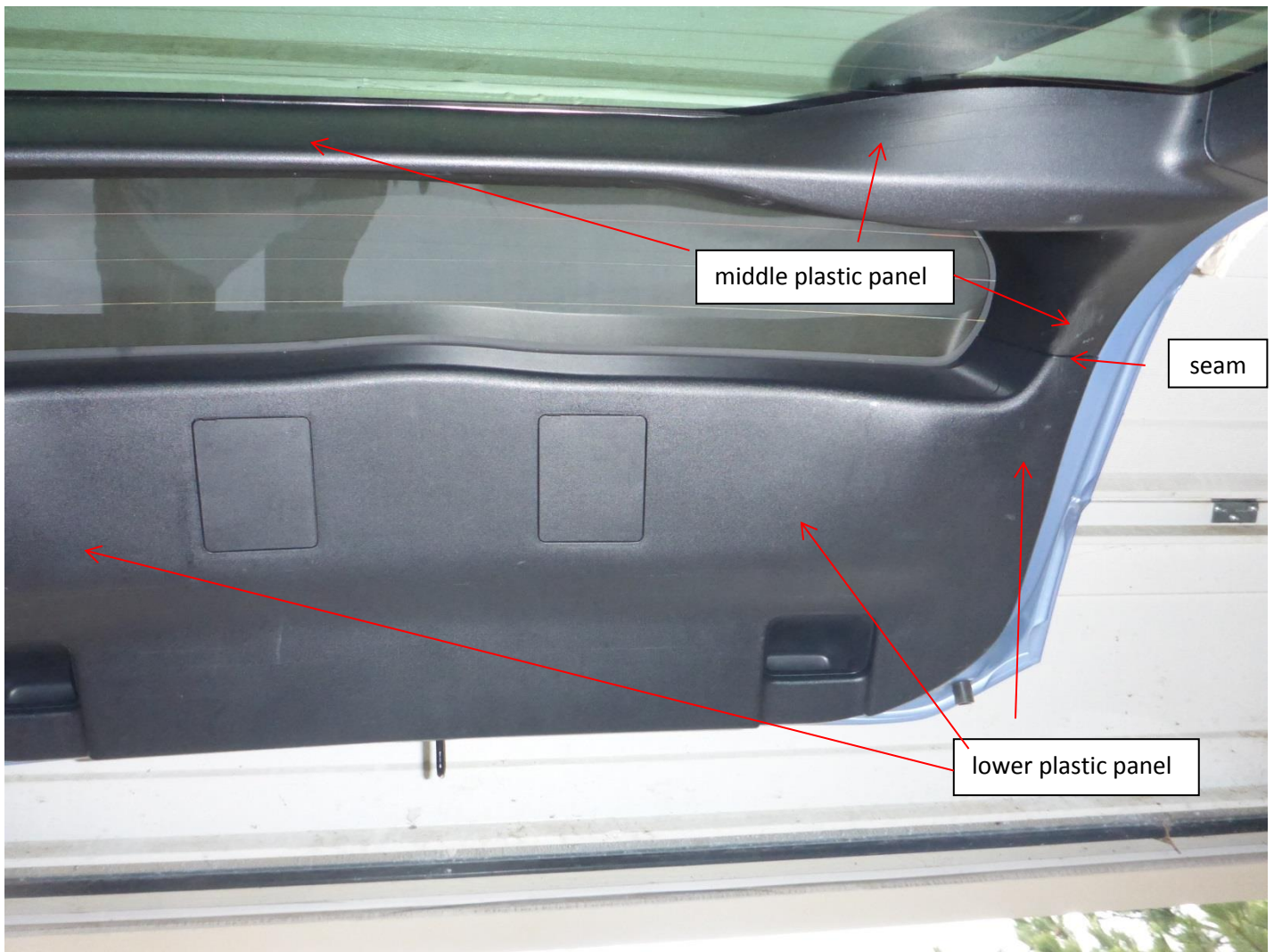
The spoiler arrives black and shiny, just like the one you or your loved one just heartlessly ripped off your trusty steed. No need to paint it or prep it in any way. It's good to go as is. It will also arrive with 2 embedded plastic rivets, one on each end of the spoiler, along with 5 embedded bolts sticking out. The only things you'll need are the nuts that go onto the bolts, but likely those are still screwed into your hatchback sheet metal from where the spoiler cleanly (hopefully!) sheared off your hatchback lid. More on that later.....

Here's what your new spoiler looks like, brand new, from the underside:



Now what? Head out to your Prius and clean out the tailgate area so you have room to play around in there. Fold down the back seats and put all the crap you had in the trunk on the folded down back seat seatbacks.

So if you're sitting in the hatchback area, facing toward the rear of the car, you'll see the hatchback interior just in front of you. On the interior hatchback are some plastic panels. You're going to need to pop them off so that you can access the holes that the bolts on your new spoiler drop into. See the picture below. The inside of your hatchback should like this. If it doesn't, you're in the wrong car in your garage:



So as you're looking at the inside of your hatchback door, you'll see that it is made up of a few plastic panels. The only ones we are going to remove are the lower plastic panel and the middle plastic panel as noted above. As you can see in the picture, there is a seam between the two panels where one begins and the other one ends.

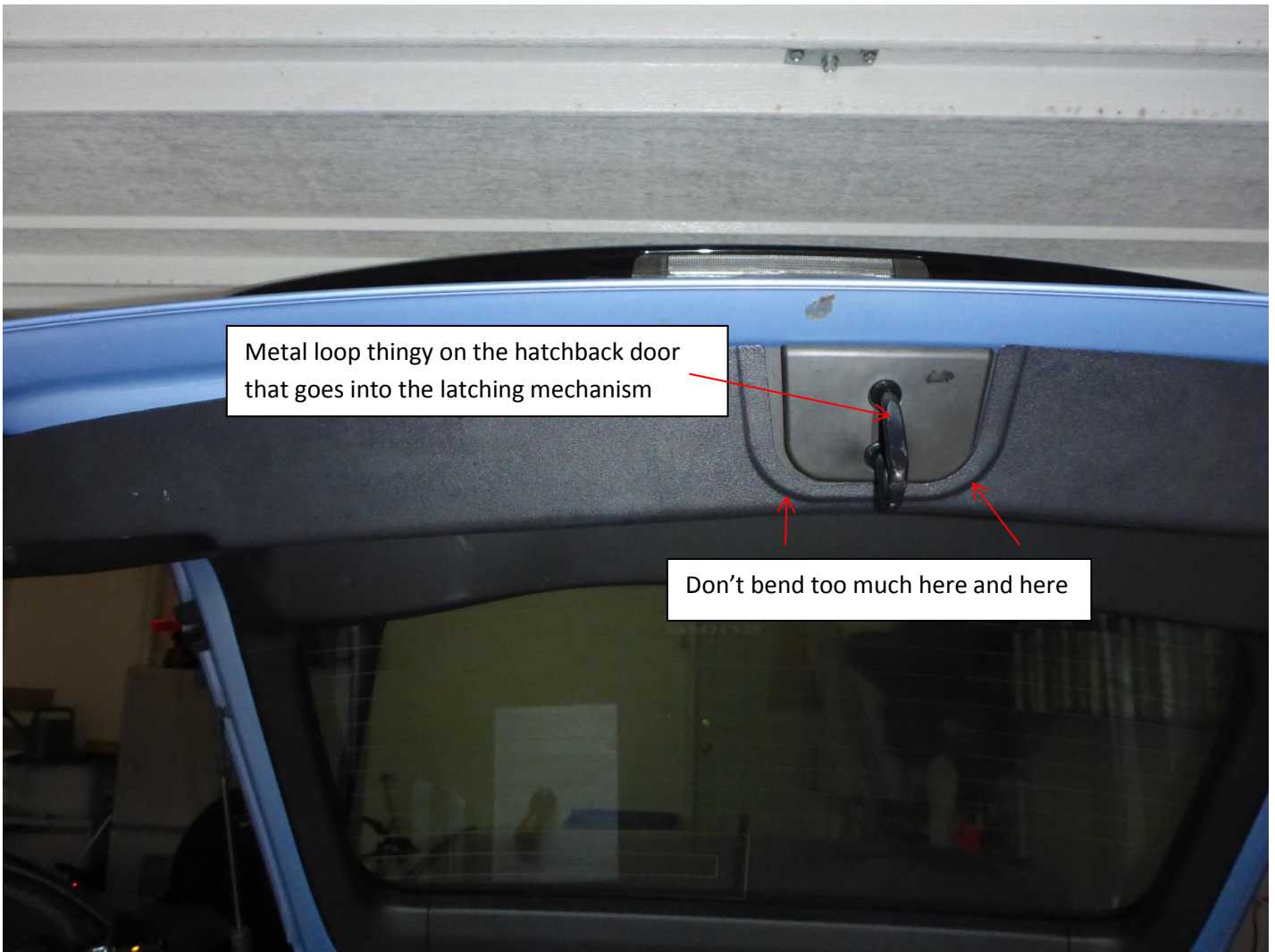
On the edge of the lower panel, there are two little notches- one on one side of the lower plastic panel, one on the opposite side. Take your plastic prying tool and put it in that notch. See the picture below:



Carefully put your plastic prying tool into the notch and start prying the lower plastic panel away from the hatchback sheet metal. It takes a bit of force to do so. You're going to be afraid that you're going to break the plastic panel. The panels are pretty durable. As long as you don't excessively twist or otherwise torque them you'll be OK. Just pull the plastic panels straight away from the sheet metal, and you'll start to hear and feel the little "pops" of the plastic rivets letting go.



Keep prying all the way around the lower panel. Make sure you don't excessively bend the panel so it doesn't crack or break. Note that there is a "thin" point right where the hatchback latch hook is as shown below:



Metal loop thingy on the hatchback door that goes into the latching mechanism

Don't bend too much here and here

As you're popping that lower panel off, it would be easy to crack the lower plastic panel right where those arrows point above. Just carefully pry and you'll be OK.

When you finally pop that lower panel off, the panel looks like this:

Left side, lower plastic panel



Right side, lower plastic panel



Now that you have the plastic lower panel off, you can pop the middle plastic panel using the same technique. When you have those off, it will look like this:

Left side, middle plastic panel



Right side, middle plastic panel



As you look at the lower plastic and middle plastic pieces, notice that they interlock at the seam (see picture of seam a few pages previous). I have pictured the interlocking pieces below, but honestly they don't make much sense until you put them back together.



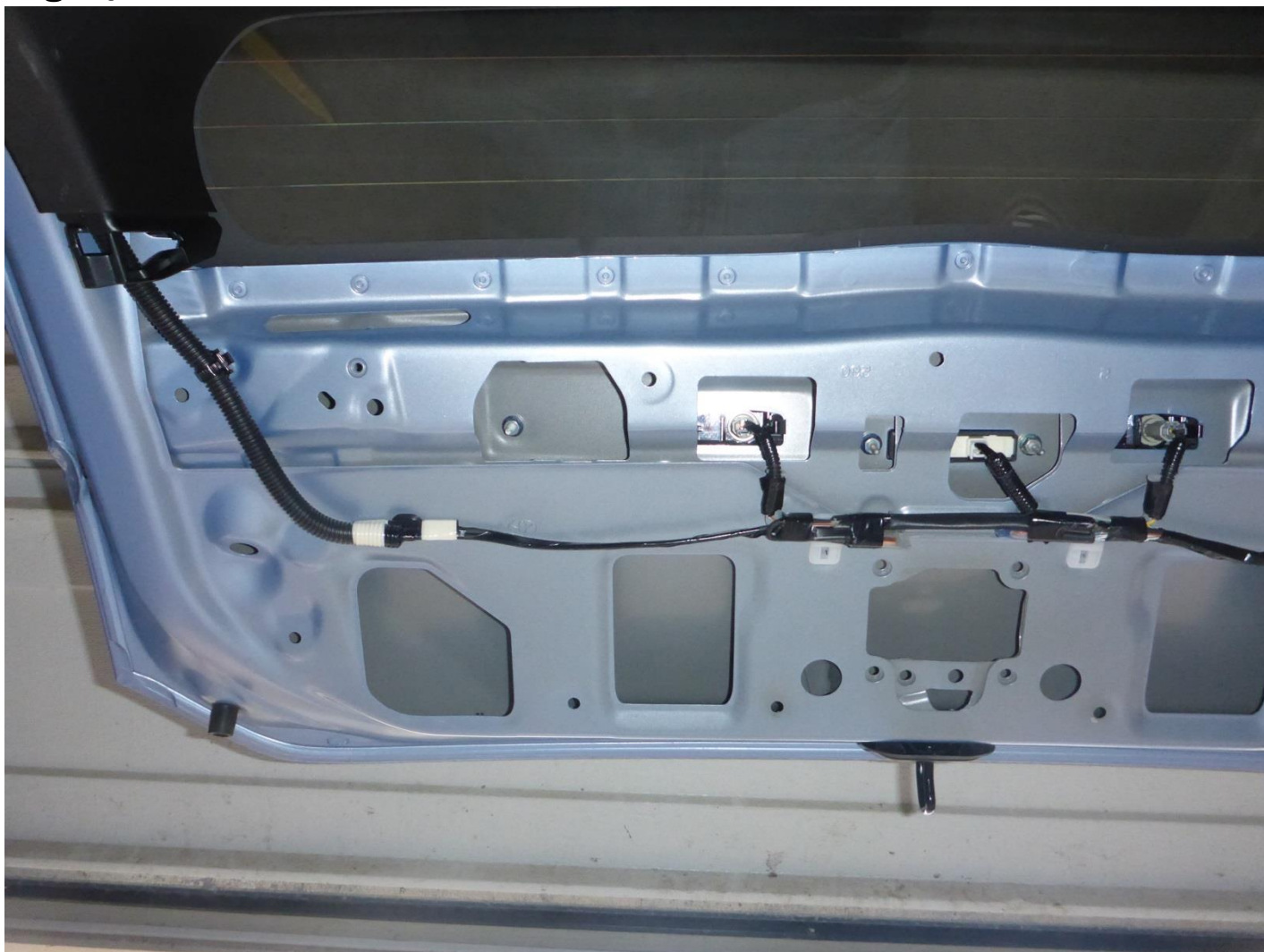
Those two pictures above are the pictures that show the interlocking joint at the “seam,” but just ignore them for now. They’ll fit together logically when you put the panels back on later. The middle and lower panels only go on one way, so it’s not too hard to figure out how they connect when you get to that step.

The next two pictures show what the interior of the hatchback looks like with the lower and middle panels removed—more for just general interest than anything else. We’re interested in the place where the spoiler attaches to the hatchback:

Left/center of interior hatchback



Right/center of interior hatchback



OK, so a little explanation before the next set of photos below. My spoiler sheared off cleanly when it was damaged. If you look at the first picture of this document, you'll see that there are 5 bolts and 2 plastic rivets that hold the spoiler to the car. The bolts are embedded in the spoiler, as are the rivets. When my spoiler sheared off, the bolts broke off from the inside of the spoiler, as did the plastic rivets. So the plastic rivets were still "riveted" to my hatchback, and the bolts were still bolted to my hatchback as well. They "did their job" in that they sheared away from the cheap part (the spoiler) rather than pulling away from the expensive part (the hatchback), which would have torn metal and likely cost more than the \$300 spoiler to repair.

Anyway, the next three pictures are looking at the hatchback. The hatchback is open. I'm standing at the rear of the car facing forward. Since I couldn't fit the entire width of the hatchback in one frame with sufficient detail, I took a "left 1/3" (first photo), a "right 1/3" (second photo), and then a "center 1/3" (third photo) of the hatchback where the spoiler bolts come through the hatchback.

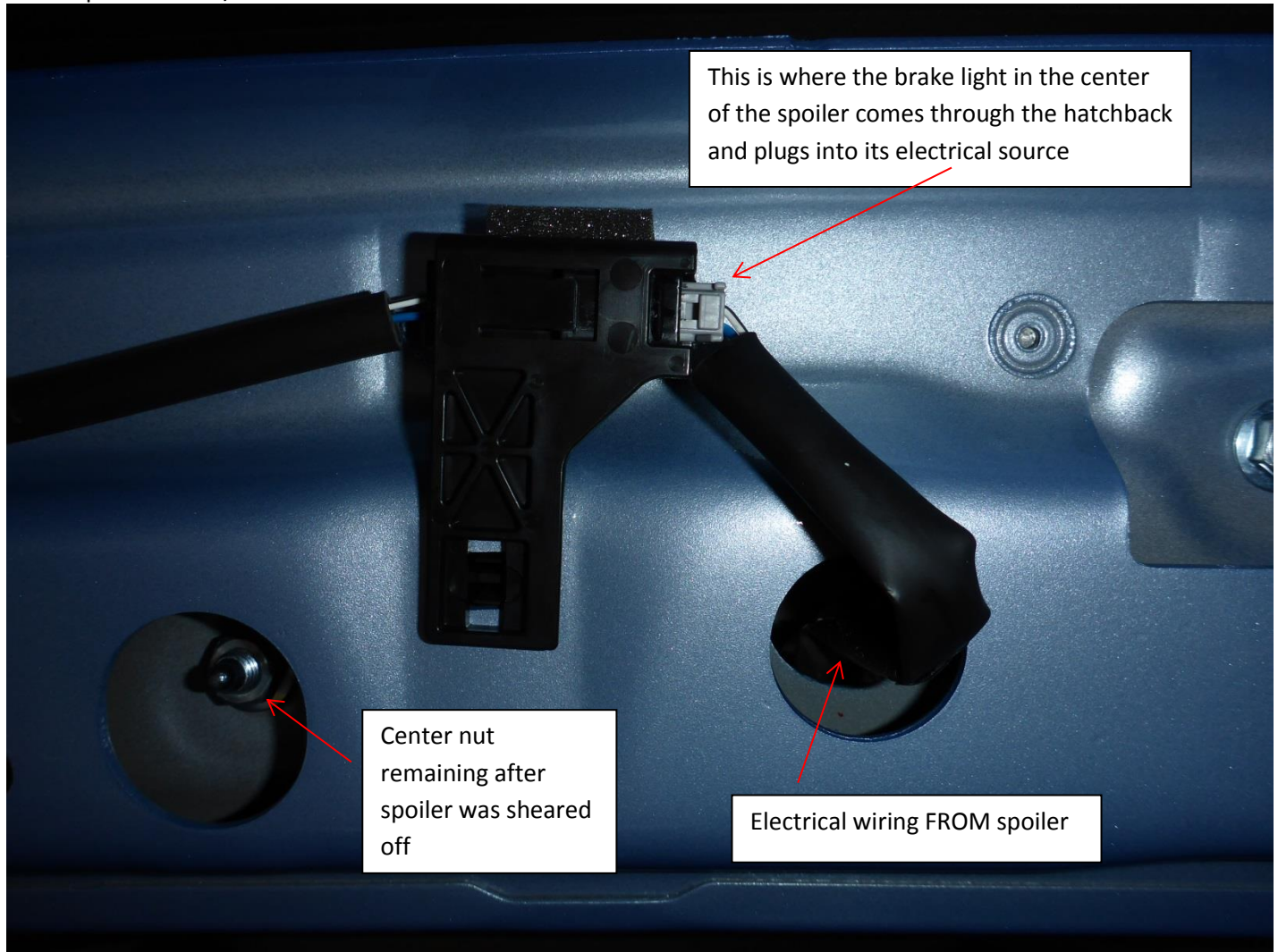
Left 1/3 of Hatchback, looking forward



Right 1/3 of hatchback, looking forward



Close-up of Center 1/3 of hatchback



As you can see because its brake wiring is still there, my spoiler was still slightly attached to my car, helped with some duct tape. I need to unplug the center brake light so that I can finally untape/remove the old spoiler from my car. It's easy. You just take a screw driver and press the little tab as shown below. When you press on the tab, the little wire plug just slides out. Easy-peasy.

Close up of above photo, Center 1/3 of hatchback



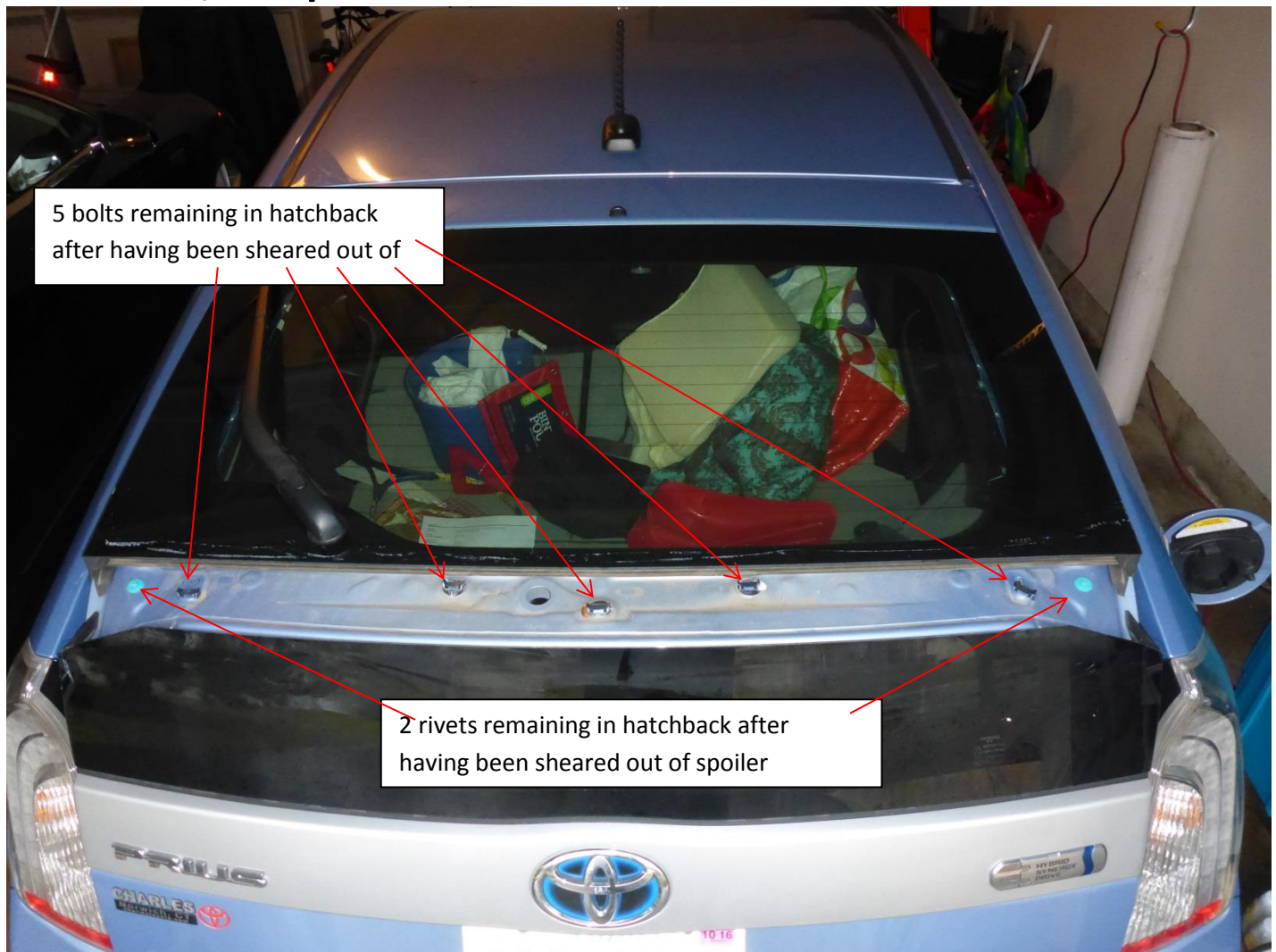
Once you have disconnected the wires, remove your spoiler from the car. Or perhaps it is already long since gone. In that case, hopefully that receptacle is still there to receive your center brake light wiring when you put the spoiler on!

This is what the Prius looks like without its spoiler:

Side view, no spoiler



Rear view, no spoiler

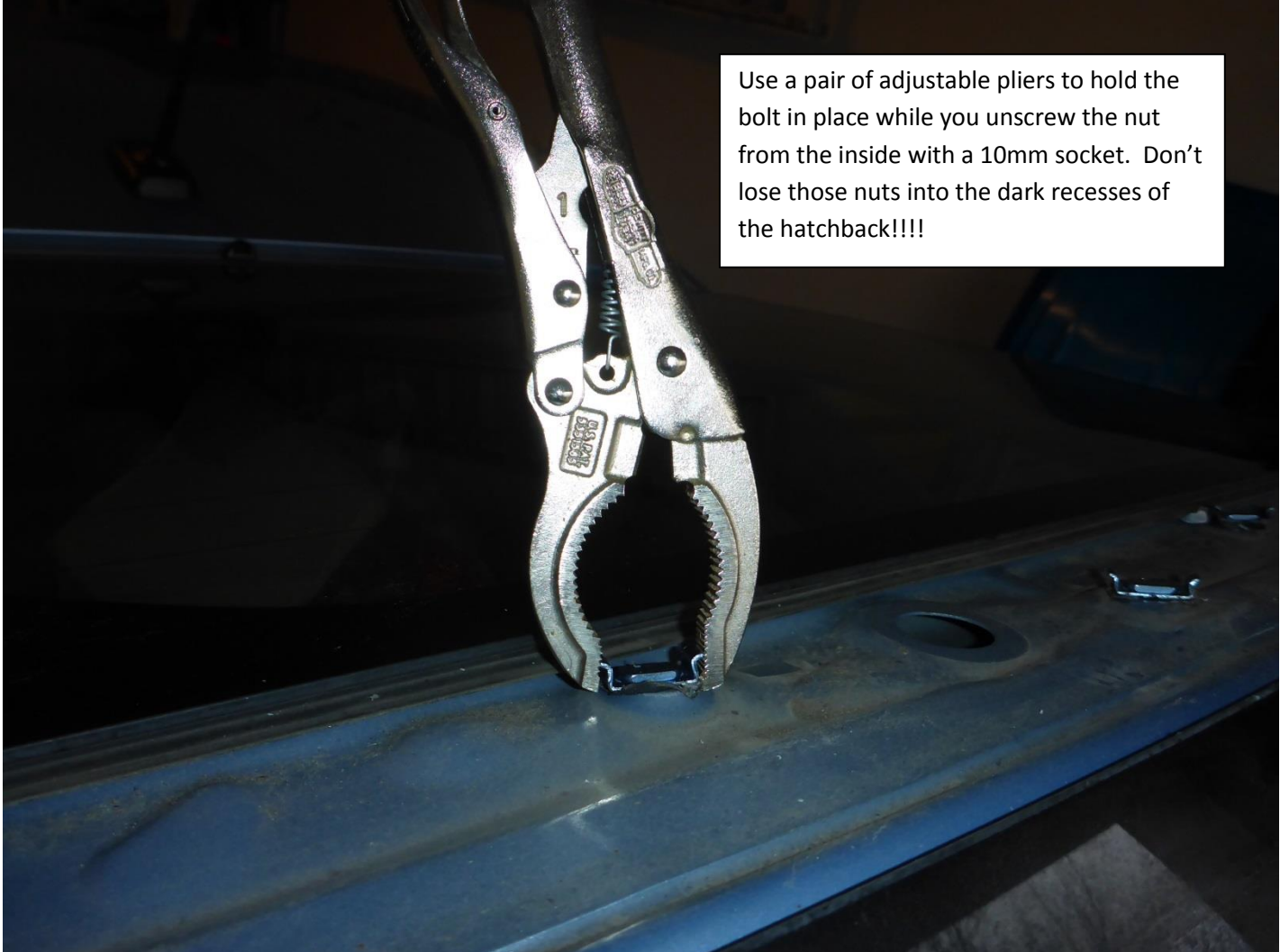


5 bolts, 2 rivets- just like your shiny new spoiler. We gotta get the old bolts and rivets out so we can put that new spoiler in. For the two rivets, just use a flat head screwdriver to pop them out. You don't have to be too fussy because even if you scratch the metal a little bit, no one would be able to see it. However, you don't want the protective layer of paint to be damaged.



Getting the nuts off the bolts is a little bit trickier. There is some sort of Loctite substance on the threads of the bolts, so they don't come off easily. Further, you're going to need those nuts later to screw onto the new bolts on your new spoiler. The nuts and bolts are what really hold the spoiler in place. The problem is that if you unscrew the bolts while the hatchback is in the up position and you drop a bolt, it will drop into a recess in the hatchback and I imagine it would be a gigantic PITA to dig those bolts out. And if you couldn't dig that bolt out, I bet it would make quite a rattle while driving down the street.

I took a pair of adjustable pliers to hold the head of the nut on the outside of the hatchback so it wouldn't spin. I then took a 10mm socket and unscrewed the nut from the bolt with the hatchback in a down position. Why a down position? If the nut falls off the bolt accidentally, it drops straight down into the trunk area rather than into the dark recesses of the hatchback. So I had the adjustable pliers in my left hand, the socket wrench in my right hand, and the tailgate almost closed. For the center nut, I had the person who sheared my spoiler off in the first place (who shall remain nameless) hold the wrench while I took the nut off from the inside of the trunk. My arms weren't long enough for this two handed operation with the center nut/bolt. If this all sounds confusing, just remove the bolts and their nuts from the hatchback any way you please. It's not rocket surgery. Just don't lose your nuts!

A close-up photograph of a pair of silver adjustable pliers. The pliers are positioned vertically, with their jaws clamped onto a small metal bolt. The bolt is resting on a dark, metallic surface, likely a car's hatchback. The background is dark and out of focus. A white text box is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image.

Use a pair of adjustable pliers to hold the bolt in place while you unscrew the nut from the inside with a 10mm socket. Don't lose those nuts into the dark recesses of the hatchback!!!!

OK, so now your Prius is ready to accept the new spoiler, but.....

We have to take the center brake light OUT of the old spoiler and put it into the new spoiler. The new spoiler does not come with the brake light assembly installed.



The above photo is the brake light in the old spoiler. See the two screws? Just unscrew them and pull the lens assembly CAREFULLY out of the old spoiler. Behind that lens assembly and attached to it is a length of wire. Carefully help the wire through the passage in the old spoiler. Don't lose the screws, and don't step on your spoilers as you're fussing around with them on the ground with these next few steps.

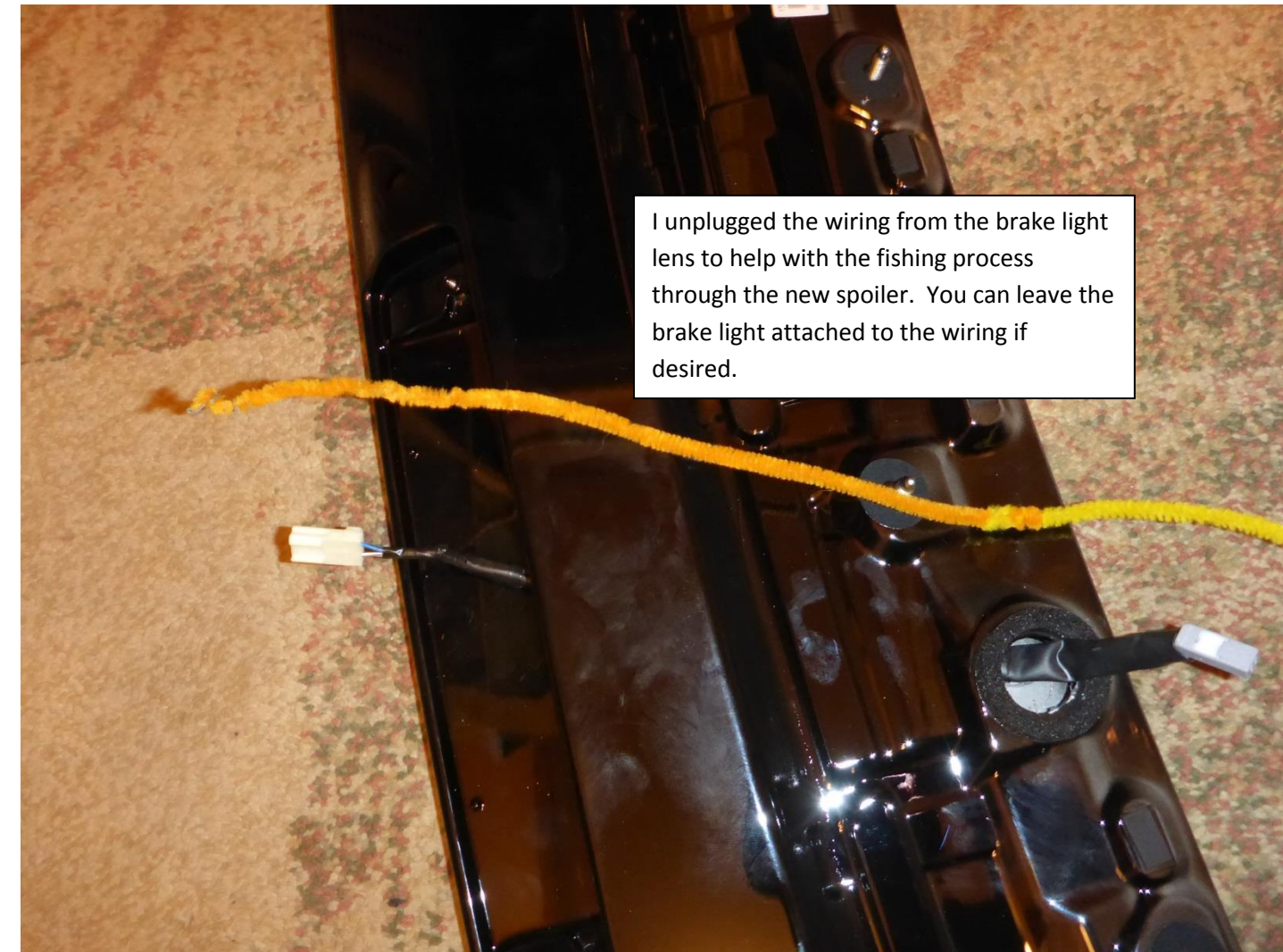


Carefully thread the wire through the old spoiler when removing the brake light assembly

After you've removed the old lens and its wiring, you'll obviously want to install it in your new spoiler. Remember how you kind of had to pull a bit hard to get the wiring through the old spoiler? Well, that tight channel for the wire is what makes it a PITA to thread it through the new spoiler!

I got a foot long length of pipe cleaner and threaded it through the wire channel in the new spoiler. I tried an electrical wire fish, but it was too thick to make it through the bend and the openings on either end of the wire channel. A wire clothes hanger might work fine too. Anyway, thread the pipe cleaner through the wire channel in the new spoiler and CAREFULLY pull the brake light wiring through. DON'T accidentally pull the little jack off the end of the wiring. Attach the pipe cleaner to the WIRE not the little jack at the end. PULL THE WIRE, NOT THE JACK- unless, of course, you like frustration and turning 2 hour jobs into 4 hour jobs.

OK, you have the brake light assembly wiring threaded through the new spoiler. Now take the two screws that I told you not to lose and use them to screw the brake light into the new spoiler. Now your spoiler is ready to attach to the hatchback.



I unplugged the wiring from the brake light lens to help with the fishing process through the new spoiler. You can leave the brake light attached to the wiring if desired.

That's about all I have for pictures because the rest is just the reverse of what I discussed above. You now have a new spoiler in your hands. It's black, shiny, covered in fingerprints, and it has your newly installed brake light assembly screwed into it. Walk over to your car. Thread the brake light wiring through its opening and make sure it goes through the hatchback. Line up the 5 bolts and 2 rivets in your spoiler with the 5 bolt holes and 2 rivet holes in your hatchback. Obviously the hatchback should be down during this step, unless you just like challenges. Use the pictures above as a reference if you get confused as to which hole is which.

Line everything up, push down on the spoiler just above where the rivets are located, and pop them into place at either end. Now you just have to take the 5 nuts that I told you not to lose, get inside the trunk area, and screw the nuts onto the bolts. NOTE: With just the rivets holding the spoiler in place initially, don't do something crazy again (remember you already tore the spoiler off once) and open that hatchback wide open with just those two little rivets holding your \$300 spoiler in place. You don't want that thing to go off flying as you raise the hatchback!

I sat in the hatchback with the hatchback lid almost closed and attached the bolts. Again, carefully start the nuts on the bolts WITHOUT them falling off and getting lost into the dark recesses of the hatchback, never to be seen again. I suggest putting the bolts on with the hatchback in the down position so that if the bolts drop, they'll drop straight down into the trunk area and not into the hatchback voids.

How much should you tighten those nuts? I don't know how many NMs one is supposed to torque those nuts. I guess you could call a local Toyota dealer and see if there's a number in their manual. I just made them all SNUG-ish. Tight enough were the spoiler felt like it was secure, but not so tight where I would crack my brand new spoiler. If in doubt, start on the looser end of snug. You can always go back and tighten later if you have to.

Plug your brake light wiring back into the receptacle on the hatchback. Have someone step on the brake to make sure the light is working.

The last step is to put the lower and middle plastic panels back on. Put the middle one in first, but leave that last rivet closest to the seam out to help facilitate the mating of the middle plastic vinyl piece with the lower plastic piece along the aforementioned seam. The connection is a little fussy, but if you play with it a little bit the lower and middle pieces snap together to form a tight seam. Once they're together, just push all the rivets in along both the lower and middle plastic pieces so that they are snug to the hatchback and you're done!!

I hope you found this helpful.

Regards,
PriusChat ualdriver