

How to Replace the Carpet in your Bass Boat

By Chris Carlyle

Replacing the worn out carpet in your bass boat can replenish those good looks years gone by. Boat carpet takes a ton of abuse and realistically has a life of about 5 years IF you take good care of it. Replacing it is a big job, no mistake but it is a job that anyone with some time and patience can do. It also will not cost you an arm and a leg. Materials for doing the carpet will run you around \$200-250. Now is also a great time to add those accessories that you have always wanted while you have everything torn apart; I added a hotfoot to my boat during the project. Check <http://www.bassboatcarpets.com> for prices and colors for carpet. They carry many grades and colors. Give them a call and they can recommend a kit that is appropriate for your boat's length and beam. I would recommend that you order their 20oz carpet kit and buy your adhesive from a local retailer. The adhesives are expensive to ship if they can be shipped at all due to their toxic nature. Unfortunately I found some hidden surprises under the carpet on my 1997 HydraSport LS205 during my project which increased the time and money required to complete the job. I had some rotten floor that I had to cut out and replace. This article does not address this job but be prepared for unseen issues, they happen.

Tools/Materials Needed:

- Climate controlled garage with LOTS of ventilation. This is assuming that you do the job over winter down time. An outdoor installation would be ideal but your boat will be out of commission during fishing season. Climate control is critical; the adhesives will not set up and adhere properly in low temperatures. You need to be able to maintain at least 60 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Carpet Replacement kit from [bassboatcarpets.com](http://www.bassboatcarpets.com) (Includes carpet, carpet knife and blades)
- More carpet knife blades (I used over 30 of them on my boat, a sharp blade is critical to a professional installation)
- Assortment of screwdrivers and other common hand tools
- Cordless Drill w/ assortment of metal drill bits
- Electric Drill
- Wire Wheel (For Drill)
- Assortment of scrapers; steel blade scraper and a painter's razor blade scraper
- LOTS of razor blades
- Adhesive Trowel (Match notch depth to carpet, consult carpet manufacturer for recommended notch depth)
- Acetone
- Alcohol
- Epoxy Resin/Filler Material (West Marine)
- Rubber gloves that are designed for working with chemicals (will not melt in acetone)
- Lots of rags
- Outdoor Carpet Adhesive
- Outdoor Contact Cement
- An assortment of SS Screws
- A good shop vac



The first step is to remove EVERYTHING from the boat. Use plastic baggies to keep all screws and related hardware in order. I used ziplock bags with labels and wrote on the bag the source of the contents with a sharpie. This step will pay big when it comes to reassembling everything. The hinges used on compartment doors will be held with either SS screws or rivets. SS is great but can tend to soften so be sure to use the correct size screwdriver to remove them or you will strip the heads out in a heartbeat. Be prepared to have to drill some out. With rivets, you will be drilling them all out. Use the appropriate size SHARP drill bit to drill out the rivets. WEAR EYE PROTECTION. If you currently have rivets, I would replace them with SS screws, this will run you \$30 or \$40 depending on how many screws you will need. Keep all of your screws organized, this will make reassembly much easier and if you have to replace them you will know exactly how many you will need of each size. Pay attention to the screw head type, some will be flat head and some will be bugle head style screws with washers.



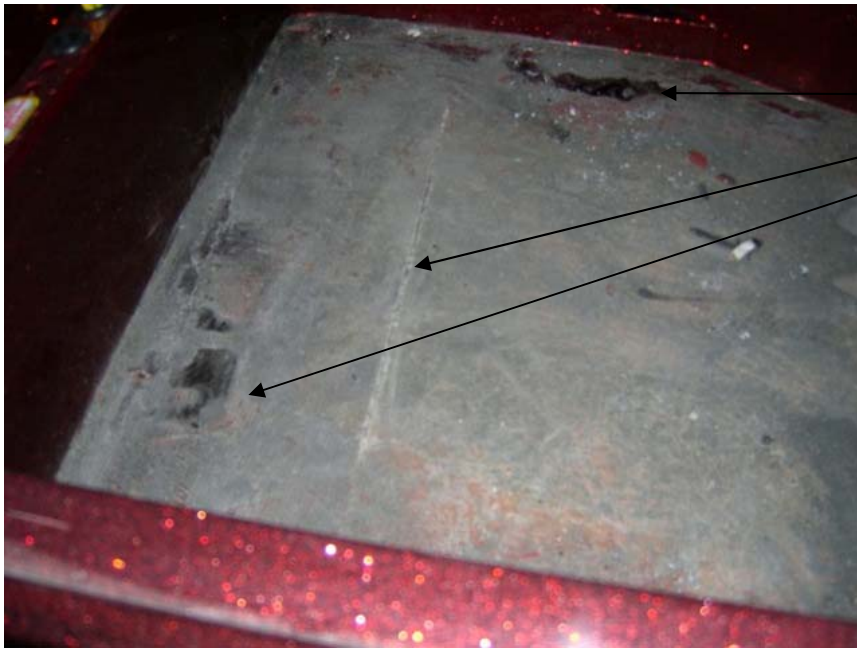
Once all of your accessories and hardware are removed now comes the fun part. You must remove every bit of the old carpeting and old adhesive. Depending on the condition of your carpet you should be able to remove it in complete sections. This will aid in patterning your new pieces later. Pull it

up slowly and use a putty knife underneath as you pull it up to keep it from tearing. Keep your pieces in a pile for later reference. This is a messy job with tons of dust. Wear a dust mask to prevent breathing in the fibers; they are nasty and certainly not good for the lungs. Once you have the carpet pulled up it is time to start scraping the old adhesive and more than likely a good portion of the old carpet backing. You do not have to remove 100% of it but the more you get off the better. A clean surface will allow for a much better adhesion of the new carpet. Believe me you don't want to do this again any time soon. Spend some time and get as much off as you can. For extra stubborn areas pull out the gloves and rags and put the acetone to use. It will soften the glue and make it much easier to remove. It will also soften plastics and flat out eat paint off so be very careful with it. **DO NOT USE WITHOUT GLOVES.** Acetone is bad stuff, do not let it get on your skin and do not breath it in. A good metal blade scraper is essential as are lots of razor blades. I used the scraper for the cockpit floor and single edge razor blades for small areas and on smooth deck top areas that were smooth fiberglass. I also used a wire wheel on a cordless drill for floor areas that were not fiberglass. The floor of my boat was encapsulated wood which I planned to re-seal so the wire wheel worked perfectly to remove all of the old goo.



Location of pedestal base

This is a shot of what the front deck looked like after just peeling up the old carpet. Notice all of the dust and debris. In this job cleanliness is Godliness, use your shop vac to periodically sweep up the debris. Use some acetone and a razor scraper to remove as much glue and carpet residue as possible. As previously mentioned be careful with the acetone it will dissolve plastic and instantly dissolve paint. I should not harm gelcoat but test it in an inconspicuous are prior to going crazy with it. Once clean you will want to fill and seal all existing penetrations in the surface. Undoubtedly there were holes where sonar units were mounted, rod straps, etc. Also remove and re-seal the holes for your pedestal mount. To fill the holes I used epoxy resin but you could get by with some 3M 5200 or similar marine adhesive/sealant. Do not use silicone, it will not last. To seal holes and any places where water could penetrate the surface, I added a solid coat of epoxy resin.



Cracked epoxy on cockpit floor

Epoxy Resin is a dangerous yet brilliant product. Read the instructions from the manufacturer. You will actually need 3 components: Epoxy Resin, Hardener and fill material. Visit your local West Marine store to purchase all of these items. Be prepared to shell out some bucks, it is not cheap but it is awesome. Make sure to mix it 100% as directed.

A shot of the cockpit area prior to scraping. It is hard to tell from this picture but the floor is plywood encapsulated in epoxy. The epoxy was cracked and fragmented in areas. You will want a smooth surface to install the carpet on so additional work was required. Once all of the glue and debris was removed, I leveled the surface with a fresh coat or two of epoxy resin using a sheet rock trowel.



Removing the carpet from the lids is the most time consuming. Most lids will be constructed of aluminum such as mine as shown. Since I was not concerned with marring the surface I loaded the acetone on heavy and let it soak. I then used a razor blade scraper and removed the majority of the old glue and carpet backing. I then moved to a wire wheel on the cordless drill to take the surface down to bare metal. This will ensure a good solid bond with the contact cement. Make sure to get under the lips as the new carpet will adhere to the underside of the lids. I also marked each lid showing the front facing side. This will be critical later when applying the carpet to the lids. Once you have all of the old glue removed and all holes sealed, wipe the entire surface down with acetone. This will remove any residue and leave you with a good clean surface for your adhesive.



Fuel

Console

Floor Drain- re-seal hole surface and bezel mount



Fuel

Patched Floor Sections

This is a shot of the cockpit floor once all of the glue had been removed. Notice that the wood is clearly visible now. You can also see the two areas where I had to cut out floor pieces and patch with replacement plywood. This plywood was fully encapsulated in epoxy resin prior to installation. I also used fiberglass cloth on all seams. The entire cockpit floor area was coated with 2 coats of epoxy resin to seal, preventing water intrusion.

Unfortunately I do not have any pictures of laying the carpet, time was of the essence. I will chronicle exactly the procedure that I used and it worked beautifully. Hopefully you saved all of your old carpet pieces as ROUGH templates. The first thing is to determine the orientation of your roll of carpet in relation to your boat. Try to use the roll lengthwise if you can. Meaning if you roll out the carpet it would go from front to back rather than strips from side to side. The beam/length of your boat in relation to the size of the roll you purchased will dictate this. Carpet has grain and it must match throughout the entire installation. You need to be 100% sure that all of your installed carpet's grain matches. If you do not, a grain mismatch from section to section will appear to be a totally different color when side by side. I marked my carpet roll with a sharpie on the bottom every foot or so with an arrow indicating which end faces forward. Mark all of your sections and lids likewise to ensure that all carpet pieces are oriented and cut correctly. If you don't, you will be ordering more. The old carpenter saying "measure twice and cut once" should be held as gospel in this project as well.

Rough cut your pieces using your old pieces as templates. Leave yourself at least 6" at all edges extra. You will want to trim the carpet to fit exactly during installation.

You will be using two different adhesives for specific areas of carpet. I recommend using a trowel and outdoor carpet adhesive for the deck and floor areas and a contact cement for the lids. The carpet adhesive allows you some flexibility to move the carpet around some once it is placed in the adhesive. The contact cement is for real. Once it makes contact with the surface it is stuck pretty good, there is no fudge factor. With the lids this is not a big deal as we can trim the carpet easily without a lot of visible edges to worry about and we are typically talking about fairly small areas. The floor areas and deck for examples require some room to shift the carpet to get the best fit as you lay it and trim it all the while not allowing any air pockets under the carpet.

Deck and Floor Areas:

- Ensure that the surface is clean and dust free
- Apply adhesive with a properly notched trowel ensuring an even and thorough coating of adhesive
- Lay your precut carpet sections into the adhesive start from the center and using a rolling pin or similar item, force out all air pockets to the outer edges. Eventhough you can move the carpet around with the adhesive, keep it to a minimum, the less you move it around the better.
- At all edges, use a straight blade screwdriver held at a 45 degree angle to drive the carpet into the corner. The angle is important, you want to make sure that the carpet is fully inserted into the corner area as you will be using a carpet knife to trim the carpet at this precise angle.
- Use a sharp carpet knife to cut the carpet at the corner. **KEEP A SHARP BLADE**, change every foot or so of cutting. A sharp blade is critical. If you have to put much effort into making the cut, change blades. It should zip through like a warm knife through butter. Continue to use your screwdriver running it along the entire length of the edge. The cut with the knife should be as close to 90 degrees and you can get it. This will ensure a good tight alignment with the horizontal portion of the inside corner. Take your time with your cuts but not too much time. You need to get the carpet fully embedded into the adhesive before it starts to set up. Use a rolling pin over the entire area once all cuts are made to ensure a good bond and ensure that no air pockets remain. Be careful with the carpet knife, that double edged blade will get you and when it does it cuts deep. I sliced my index finger almost to the bone more than once during my project. It is easy to move your index finger on top of the knife to get leverage on the cut, this equals stitches.

Compartment Lids:

- Compartment lids are by far the easiest yet the most time consuming.
- Lay out your carpet face down on the floor and place your lids face down on the carpet while keeping track of which edge of the lid faces front and align this with your carpet grain that you have been using throughout the project. Keep at least 2" of spare space between your lids as you lay them out. Note that you need to allow for enough carpet to fold over and back under the lip at all edges.
- Using a sharpie, trace each lid on the carpet then remove each lid. Rough cut each carpet piece still maintaining your proper grain direction. I drew on each piece with an arrow marking forward facing portion of the carpet. When rough cutting the pieces, ensure that you have enough to wrap the lip with 2" spare.
- Starting one lid at a time, apply the contact cement to the lid face as well as the carpet itself but only inside the area that was traced in the previous step. This will allow us to bond the carpet to the lid but only on the face. We will cement the edges in the next step and the face being bonded will aid in a wrinkle and air bubble free installation.
- Once the cement has had a few minutes to tack, align the lid with the carpet and lay it in place. I did mine on a concrete floor and simply stood on the lid to ensure a good bond with the carpet. If the adhesive was at the correct stage the bond will be instant and pretty solid.
- Next it is time to wrap the lip and cut to fit. You will need to cut the corners of the carpet VERY carefully to ensure that you do not leave areas uncovered by carpet when you wrap it. Inside and Outside corners are equally tricky and I cannot explain to you how to do it in words. My suggestion is to take some scrap pieces and make some practice cuts to ensure that you have a system down for the corners. If you screw it up now you will have to either 'try' to patch it or rip it all off and start over. As I said before, measure twice, cut once and make sure that the edges line up before you cut it.
- Once you have all of your corners cut to allow you to wrap the carpet under the lip, apply the contact cement again to the carpet and to the lid and allow it to tack. Then simply fold the carpet over the lip and press firmly to ensure a good bond. Trim any excess carpet via the inside corner under the lip. If you have been careful and checked your angles prior to cutting you should end up with a very professional job.
- Allow the contact cement to dry thoroughly, preferably overnight then you can cut in your hatch pulls and reinstall them.

Reassembly

- Once all the carpet is laid and adhesives have dried fully, you can begin the reassembly process. This is when it begins to get exciting as your new carpet really starts to come together.
- Reinstall your hatch hinges using the old SS screws from the baggies that were marked during tear down. If any of the screws are bent or have boogered up heads, replace them. Most hardware stores carry SS screws in a plethora of sizes. Do not skimp on the screws, use SS only. Make sure to replace any rivets with screws as well for attaching hinges and or accessories. If any of your screw holes are rounded out, either step up to a slightly larger diameter screw or fill the hole with epoxy resin and re-drill.
- When everything is reassembled step back and admire your new boat. A new carpet job will make any boat look like new and the feeling is very rewarding. During the job you will think to yourself why you every started this project but at this point you will be glad that you did. Congrats, you did it.
- I applied 2-3 cans of 3M Scotchguard following a good vacuum to protect the carpet at least for awhile.
- Keep it clean and vacuum regularly to keep it looking good as long as possible.











