

Audi A3 Electric Windows Fix

Introduction

It seems like the Audi A3's electric windows are a common problem. Certainly both of mine have broken now. The usual symptom is the windows goes down, and then refuses to rise back up, winding itself back into the door. You'll find if this happens you can coax the window up by working the switch while guiding the window up by hand.

What Happens

A small plastic clip that holds the window to the lifter breaks, and the lifter cable comes adrift. The window then lifts askew, and jams in the guides. The motor senses the jam, assumes something is caught in the window, and drops it again.

The Fix

Either a new mechanism, new clips, or if you like, try gluing the old one. Some people have had the glue (or a cable tie!) work, but mine failed. The cheapest and easiest guaranteed fix is to replace the clips with new ones from the Audi Dealer- part No. 4B0 837 463B. New mechanisms are available from [Euro Car Parts](#), if you go that way. Either way, most of the work is the same, so here you go. Before you start, lower the window fully.

You'll need a selection of screwdrivers and Torx bits (the screws holding the glass are T45, apparently), some smallish snips, and some cable ties. If you're replacing the whole mechanism, you'll need a pop riveter and some unusually long rivets, and maybe a longish M6 bolt- see below. You should also allow enough time and/or good weather to complete the job, as you have to remove a good part of the door structure. Don't worry- it's not difficult.

Stripping the door

First remove the door card. Unscrew the screws either end at the top:



Remove the screw under the door pull (circled, but not clear in my photo), pull out the cover, and remove the 2 screws underneath. The door card will now lift upwards and off. Watch out for the cables.



Release the metal clip, and detach the door release cable from the handle.



Disconnect the electrics from the door card. You'll need a small screwdriver for the window switch, as there's a small tab to release. You have to remove some foam from around the window/mirror switches too, but that's not in the photo. It just pulls out.



Now take the door card away and put it somewhere safe.

Removing the door subframe

A lot of the door framework, the door mirror, and the winder mechanism are all on a subframe that lifts out of the panelwork. Alignment of the subframe is critical to the door shutting properly, so you need to mark its position. There's 4 Torx bolts, 2 wedges, 1 bracket and 2 dowels that locate the subframe. Before you start mark the position of the wedges (at the bottom) with a marker pen. Also mark the front one so you put it back in the front:



Now mark the position of the bracket (front top of the door) and the bolt and dowel (back top of door). I drew around the bolt with the marker pen. Note that at the front, the dowel fits into the bracket.



Undo the bolts and remove the bracket. The subframe will drop a little, but won't fall out. Disconnect the cable from the window motor, and unclip from the cable clips on the subframe. Pull off the trim from behind the mirror, pull out the foam, and disconnect and unclip the cable here too.



I found the fabric tape on the cables tore, rather than the clips pulling out, so I replaced them with cable ties when I put things back together.

The cable loom should now be free of the door. Pull out the door lock button from the lock mechanism- it just unclips.

Now move the cables out of the way, and lift the subframe clear. Take it somewhere safe to work on it, and don't scratch the mirror cover ;-).

Removing the glass

Place the subframe mirror side up on a flat surface (like my lawn!) Unscrew the 2 screws, pull the plastic tabs from around the glass and wiggle the glass free carefully- and put it somewhere safe. Remove the plastic tabs that fit over the glass, and underneath are 2 plastic clips which locate onto nipples on the mechanism's cable. They're orange in my photos- this is the new mechanism. Original ones are green or blue, and new, modified clips from the dealer are pink with a metal insert. You'll probably find one is broken (thanks to HTC from audi-sport.net for the pictures, and for an earlier howto)- good one first, broken one second, with the third picture being my new mechanism, and the fourth being the original (green) and modified (pink) clips side by side. My new regulator had orange clips, so in summary, modified clips are pink with metal inserts, older, all plastic ones are blue, green, or orange. I'm hoping the unmodified, orange clips on my new regulator don't break while I still own the car.....:



Sometimes, a good blob of araldite to hold the cable nipple in place works fine, but mine didn't hold. My clips were green, and the plastic is quite slippery. It's also brittle: when I tried to remove one to get a good photo, it broke. Maybe the blue ones stick better? If you want to try the araldite, do that, let it set for a bit, and then join us below after we replace the regulator mechanism.

One person has reported having the same problem on an A6, and has had success by drilling 2 holes in the plastic and using a cable tie to secure the winder cable. Again, give this a go if you like, and miss out the section on replacing the regulator.

Update: As advised by another poster, you can buy and replace the clips. The part no. is at the top of the page. I unbolted the motor, so I could move the mechanism, but Simon Young emailed me and said that he left the motor on, reconnected the cables, and used the motor to move the mechanism up and down. Flip the clips upwards, and ease them off the cables. You'll find you have to move them to different places on the tracks to get enough room, which is why you have to remove the motor, or connect it back up.

David Williams reported that on an early A3, the clips need a bit of trimming and filing to fit the fold-over tabs, and that the tabs can be brittle too- I didn't have this problem on a 1999 car.



Replace the clips with the new ones, then grease all the runners and cables, and carry on down the page to 'Refitting'.

Replacing the regulator

You'll need 4 4mm pop rivets long enough to pass through your regulator mechanism (the holes are on the pulleys at the corners), a 6mm pop rivet (or an M6 bolt), a cable tie, a power drill with a 10mm or so bit, and a pop riveter gun. The rivets are unusually long: I was lucky my Land Rover owning neighbour had a good selection....

Unbolt the motor, if you haven't already (3 torx screws) and pull it clear. It can be a bit stiff to pull off.

Locate the pop rivets in the pulleys:



and one that holds the silver plate where the plate that holds the motor was riveted to the subframe. Drill the heads off. I found the rivets span around unless I put a bit of tension on the frame. Cut the cable tie and bend the clips back that hold the cables to the frame, and lift the regulator clear. Drop the new one in it's place, and pop rivet the pulleys. If you have the correct rivet, rivet the silver plate back too.



I didn't, so i used an M6 bolt through the frame. Replace the cable tie, and bend back the clips gently.

Locate a hole in the white plastic moulding where the motor fits- it's on the face the motor fits against. Pump grease in here- I used a syringe from my ~~crack-habit~~ toolbox. Grease the runners and cables too.



Refitting

Wiggle the glass back into place carefully, refit the plastic tabs around the bottom, and refit the screws loosely. Run the glass up and down a few times in the runners to align it, and tighten the screws. Refit the motor, if you removed it. Take the subframe back to the car, and carefully lower it into the door, making sure the subframe sits right, you don't trap any cables, and the dowels engage in the slots as shown above. If you can get some help here, it would be easier, but I managed to do it alone.

Fit the bolts, bracket and wedges loosely, and line up all the marks you made earlier before tightening. At this point, shut the door gently to make sure it all lines up properly. Replace the door lock button- If you were a retard like me and forgot it when removing the subframe, breaking the clip, a cable tie works a treat:



Reconnect the window motor cable and mirror cable (replace the foam here too), and secure with cable ties to the subframe. HINT: At this point, you might want to get the window switch out of the door card, connect it, and test the window!

All that's left to do now is reconnect the cables in the door (don't forget the piece of foam behind the window switch), and refit the door card- just reverse the instructions above. Don't forget to guide the lock button through the hole as you lower it on.

A note for international readers: Gary Cox (gary[at]oaktreegroup.com.au) reported that he was told by an Audi dealer the clips are no longer available. The dealer then tried to sell him a regulator for around GBP130 (I paid GBP60 for mine). Happily, some quicksteel epoxy seems to have worked for him. I can however confirm the modified clip is [still available from UK Audi dealers](#) as of August 2008.

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