

# 1964-1966 Steering Column Repair

## Typical symptoms of a defective steering column

- A. The car slipping out of park
- B. Having to pull up on the shift lever to start the car
- C. Shift linkage is sloppy; unable to achieve correct gear placement
- D. Turn signals do not cancel on right turns (65-66 only)
- E. Up & down movement in the steering wheel, independent of the column
- F. Steering column will not slide over
- G. Sloppy or loose shift arm or actuator

A, B, & C are problems associated with a worn or missing lower steering column bushing / or a worn shift arm. The original steering column bushing is plastic and eventually disintegrates causing the shift tube to lose its support. The bushing supports the shift tube relative to the steering column and prevents it from moving in any other fashion other than its designed movement. When the bushing fails, the shift tube can flop around inside the steering column causing other problems. The shift arm slides on a detent, which enables you to find the desired gear. The shift arm is designed to lock into park by sliding into a recessed notch on the detent. Over three decades of sliding up and down on the detent, this part eventually wears a groove into the shift arm itself, which does not allow for the shift arm to lock into the park position. If you have these symptoms, your car is a potential hazard to both you and property. It allows your car to slip into another gear and the consequences could be deadly.

Problem D & E occur only on the 1965- 1966 Thunderbirds. Due to the upper steering shaft bearing support sleeve, the support sleeve is a rubber bushing that gives support and stability to the upper steering shaft bearing. Original sleeves are plastic and eventually disintegrate. Once this happens the steering shaft and steering wheel do not line up with their appropriate adjusting points. This throws the alignment of the internal workings of the column. Being misaligned, the turn signal return dowels cannot reach the upper right return lever, which cancels the right hand turn.

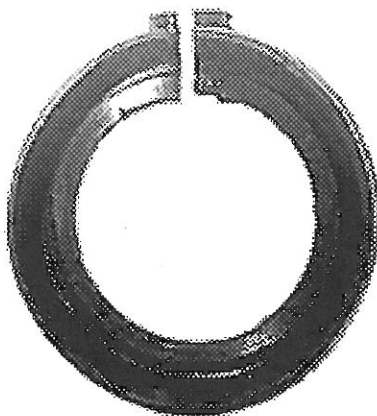
F is caused by improper slide mechanism adjustments.

G has two related causes, the first of which is a worn shift arm retaining pinhole. If the

pinhole in the column is only worn, it can easily be fixed. Drill the hole out and put in a larger pin. If the hub is broken and pieces are missing than the hub must be replaced.

**Easy steps for lower steering column bushing replacement: Be sure to block the tires as not to allow the car to move while you do these procedures. Put on your emergency brake. Safety first!!**

1. Remove the Driver side hood hinge. For easy installation, scribe alignment marks at the hood and the hinge to frame mounts. Do this and reassembly will be much easier.
2. Just under the shift arm hub, (the area that the shift arm mounts into) is a small access hole for a Phillips head screw or sometimes a bolt. Remove this screw or bolt. Placing the car in neutral might help to align the access hole with the screw/bolt.
3. On the lower portion of the column under the dash you will find the neutral Safety switch-actuating lever. Remove this lever by removing the 5/16 head bolt.
4. Located just above the Neutral Safety switch is the slide mechanism-actuating lever, which is attached to the shifter tube. Do not remove this. Grab it and slide the shifter tube forward toward the front of the car. It will only slide for 1 1/2 ". Sliding the shifter tube forward will give you enough space to insert the new bushing.
5. The Lower shift tube bushing is made of hard rubber. It is shaped like a donut with an alignment dowel on the outside edge. This dowel is for aligning the bushing and to support the tube. Cut the bushing in half right between this alignment dowels. Insert the



bushing at the bottom of the steering column, inside the engine compartment between the shift tube and steering column body. Be sure

to insert the alignment notch dowel into the notch provided on the steering column body. Once the bushing is in place, move the shift lever in the car from park to drive a few times to ensure that it seats itself properly. Make sure that the bushing does not pop out. This is the last process. Reverse this order to reassemble the column and car. This should take the average shade tree mechanic a couple of hours.

**Shift are removal: Again, we stress that you talk the appropriate safety precautions such as bracing the wheels, and placing the emergency brake on.**

To remove the shift arm, first locate the proper size punch for the roll pin. It HAS to be a few thousandths of an inch smaller than the actual size of the pin. Using a punch that is too large or small will only guarantee that you will never get the arm off and that you will be replacing the collar and arm.

1. Put the gear selector into LOW gear, indicated by the letter "L" on the shift column.
2. Hammer the pin out from the top of the collar, pushing the pin down toward the floor.
3. Once the pin has been removed, grab the shift arm and wiggle it back and forth while pulling the arm out. This should result in the arm coming out of the column.

Reinstall the arm by wiggling it back into place. Than hammer the new pin in from the bottom. Ensure that the shift hub is in park, which is indicated as "P" on your shift selector.