

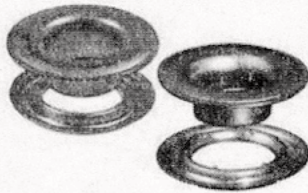
Tech-Tips

Installing Grommets

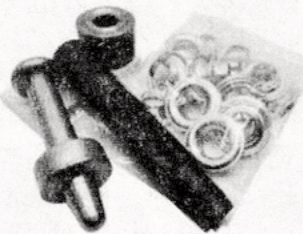
by Paul Carey

Last month I discussed installing snaps on fabric or leather. This month we will look at how to install a grommet on the same type of material.

A grommet is a metal ring which, once properly fitted to the material, offers a reinforced hole to tie or hang. It can be used to repair a tarpaulin, fabricate a tie-down cover, provide a hole to hang an item from a wall, or any one of many other uses. Grommets come in a variety of sizes, and the installation tools are designed to fit a particular size grommet. A small installation plier cannot be used to install large grommets, nor can the tools used to install larger grommets be used for the smaller sizes.



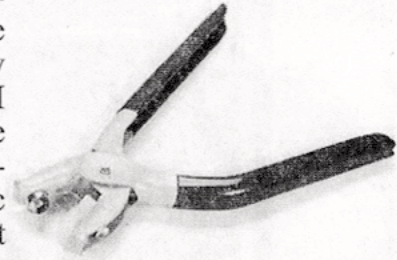
When I first needed grommets they were the smaller type – I don't remember the job. I purchased a grommet plier from a local fabric store for about \$15. When installed, the grommet hole was about 1/4" in diameter. That's pretty small. Later, when I had to fabricate a tie-down cover for my truck I needed larger grommets. The plier wouldn't work. I bought a package of grommets and the installation tool from Ace hardware. Those were 3/8" grommets. The installation tools are simple: three parts – a hole punch, a setting tool and an anvil.



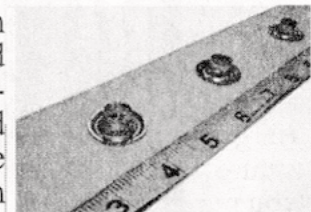
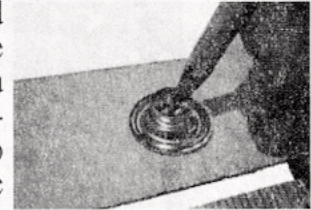
If the grommets are going to be used in an outdoor or wet environment, be sure that they are solid brass or aluminum. Brass plated, painted or base metal will not stand up to the outdoor elements.

Like the snaps, grommets (except for the very tiny type) are two part. I do recommend a couple of other tools to make the installation easier and neater. A set of hole punches is a good idea, but not necessary. An Exacto knife is a good idea, and you will need a hammer and a solid place to work. It is not a job to be done on the dining room table.

For the 1/4" grommets, all that is needed is the installation tool. Mine was made by Dritz and I found it in the 'notions' section of a fabric store for about \$15. It is the only tool that you need – no hammer or punches.



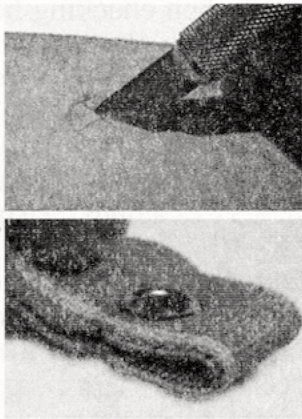
If you are installing just a single corner grommet, mark the place that the grommet will be installed. A good way of doing this is to set the raised section of the two-part grommet in position and mark the center hole with a pencil. If you are fabricating something like a cargo cover, lay the fabric out, measure and mark the distance between each grommet and then set a grommet-half at each marked point, outline the circle with a pencil and then get ready to install the grommets.



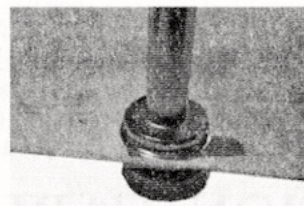
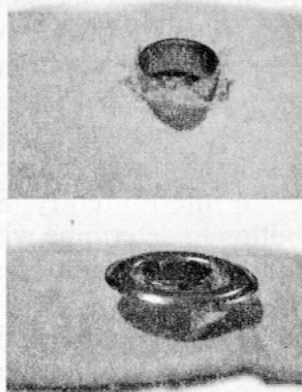
For the small grommets, use the installation pliers. One side of the jaw has a fixed

anvil; the other half has a rotating part. Turn the rotating section so the small end is forward. Center it over the marked hole and squeeze the pliers. The built-in punch will leave you with a 5/16" hole (if the fabric is too tough for the pliers, use a hole punch to create the hole). Install the raised half of the grommet from the face of the fabric (the raised post will come through the hole on the back side). Set the locking ring (domed side up) over the post, rotate the anvil on the plier to the larger section, set the grommets and fabric between the jaws and squeeze. The post will be folded over locking the two parts of the grommet and the fabric together.

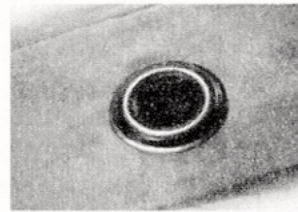
When using larger grommets, either use a hole punch to remove the fabric from the intended hole, or use an Exacto knife and cut an 'X' within the marked hole. Unless the fabric is very heavy (like leather) it is not necessary to cut the fabric out of the hole. I do recommend that the fabric (again, unless it's very heavy) be folded over giving you a double thickness. The grommet will not have the tendency to tear out under stress.



Place the raised section of the grommet through the hole from the face of the fabric (the raised post will be on the back side of the fabric or leather). Set the locking ring (domed side up) over the raised post and set the grommet/fabric on a sturdy bench or table. You may want to use a block of wood under the grommet so that you do not damage the bench surface. Place the anvil (included with the larger grommet

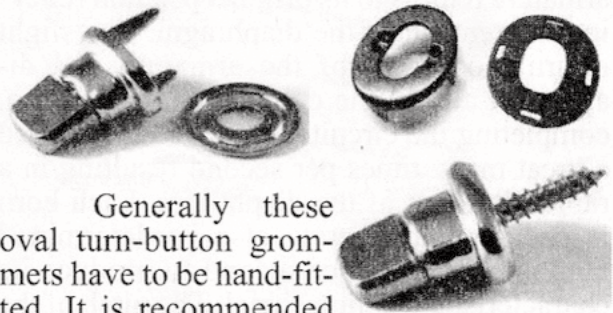


installation kit) under the face of the grommet, set the punch (also included with the installation kit) on the raised post, and strike a sharp blow with the hammer. The metal of the raised post will be folded over locking the two halves of the grommet and the fabric together. Repeat with each of the marked holes.



That's it! I do recommend that you practice with one or two grommets before starting the actual project. You will get the feel of cutting the hole, setting the grommet and of how much pressure you should apply with the hammer.

Another type of grommet is a special use product known as a turn-button. Instead of the grommet being round, it is oval and designed to fit over a turn-button fastener. When the turn-button is rotated 90 degrees, it locks over the oval grommet.



Generally these oval turn-button grommets have to be hand-fitted. It is recommended that backing plates be used for extra strength. They are not readily available in hardware stores, and so installation tools might be difficult to obtain.

These turn-buttons can be used for quick-removal covers. They are available in various sizes and can be used on heavy fabrics like canvas. You are best advised to purchase them online. Google 'turn-button fasteners' and you will find a variety of sources.

S.K.