



# Tombstone Gun Grips

## Fitting and Assembly of Three Piece Gun Grips (Left and Right Panels and Spacer, which make a 1-piece assembly)



The Tombstone Grip is intentionally oversize. You will need to carefully sand and shape each piece to fit your particular weapon. I have not put a finish on these grips because with the amount of sanding, handling and cutting you will be doing, any finish I put would be gone by the time you complete fitting the grips. You perhaps will find some areas on the front of the grip that seem to be shinier than others. This is the mold release residue. Gentle sanding with 320 grit sandpaper will remove it before you begin the polishing process.

After you remove your old grips, check to be sure the new ones are in fact large enough to fit the frame. Now be sure the frame is completely clean and check all screws and springs. Then file off all the casting burrs and assorted lumps on the frame and hammer area. This is the only way you will achieve a tight fit of your new grips. Colt clone back frames are usually investment castings. The assembly plant hardly ever removes any of the burrs, and uneven areas of the frame. Reassemble the frame without the grips and set it aside for now.

Look at the bottom of the grip panels. You will possibly see some of the excess I have left by over-pouring the mold. It will appear as a shiny line near the edge of the grip. Take the 120-grit paper and attach it to a flat surface. You can use tacks, glue, whatever you prefer, but be sure it is flat and not going to move. Set the panel on your sandpaper and start sanding with a back and forth motion, changing to a circular motion once in a while. You are simply trying to get the bottom of the panels flat. Do not rush. Excessive pressure will not be necessary, you are removing slightly over 1/32" of material. A trick here, take a large magic marker and "paint" the entire bottom of the grip before starting to sand. When all the black is gone, the panel is flat, assuming your hands grip on the panel kept it flat on the sandpaper. A Tip here, save as much of the plastic dust as you can. You can mix it with epoxy to repair mistakes in shaping the spacer block. **CAUTION: Wear a face mask to avoid breathing in fine dust.**

Set one of the grip panels on the frame and check to see that the excess on the new grip is reasonably centered. If needed, remove some material from the top or front of the grip at the hammer area. This area forms the starting point for all the rest of the work you do. It **MUST** be square on the top and front surfaces, don't worry about it being too high at this point. You can sand and shape it later, just get it as square as you can.

Take the Sharpie fine point marker and outline your frame on the grip. **TAKE YOUR TIME.** Cut the outline with the coping saw if it is more than about 1/8 to 3/16 oversized. You can sand off less, later. Depending on your skill, you could use a Dremel tool with a sanding drum or shaping burr. Don't try to rush. Slow and easy will result in a lot less mistakes. Repeat the process on the other panel. It is a good idea to continuously check the panels for fit on the back against the frame.

When you are satisfied you have the fit the way you want it, clean the grip panels in warm soapy water to remove your greasy fingerprints and set them aside to dry. You want the grips to be a little large at this point, but flat against the frame.

Let's attack the grip spacer. Do **NOT** sand the edges where it will contact the grip panels at this time. Shape the spacer to fit between the hammer spring and the back strap. It must be as close to a snug fit as you can make it. Any slop here will show up as loose grips. Take your time; I have left enough material on the spacer to fit properly. Drop the spacer in place and double check the excess material sticking out of the right and left side of the back strap. Now sand **ONE SIDE** of the spacer flat. I use this method because it is far easier to cement two surfaces together correctly and be able to see what you are doing than try to cement the three pieces at one time. Use the same method as you did on the grip panel, and paint it with the magic marker and sand it until all the black is gone. Clean it with warm soapy water and dry it completely. Apply a **THIN** coat of Vaseline to the inside edge of the back frame and the hammer spring. Believe me, cement will stick quite well to these areas if you allow it to.

Now, you will glue the spacer to one side of the grips (one panel). There are lots of glues and epoxy on the market. I recommend either contact cement or Gorilla Glue. Drill several random, shallow holes in the spacer (about 3/32" deep or more) on both sides and the grip panels, where the spacer will sit. When you glue your assembly, be sure to fill these holes with glue. A toothpick is handy for this job. This forms "rivets" and helps increase the structural strength of the assembly.

Apply a thin coat of glue to the spacer and grip panel. I like to clamp the grip to the back frame with rubber coated clamps then carefully set the spacer in place, clamping it also. **BE SURE THE ASSEMBLY IS PERFECTLY ALLIGNED WITH THE BACK FRAME.** Set the assembly aside to dry overnight. Follow the manufacturers instructions as far as allowing the glue to completely dry.

As far as I am concerned, the next step is the hardest to accomplish. The spacer will be sticking up higher than the spring and frame. You have to carefully sand away just enough of the spacer to be flush with the frame. Make sure the surface stays flat and parallel to the other side as you sand or file. I'll leave the method up to you. Just don't rush it. When you are satisfied with the fit, put a little Vaseline on the spring and frame and apply the glue to the panel and spacer. Check the fit and clamp. Allow the glue to completely dry. Remove the frame from the weapon and if you didn't glue the spring to the grip it should slip apart. You can now shape the rest of the grip assembly.

The easy way to shape the outline to match your gun is to carefully mark the outline with a fine pencil and sand with a coarse or medium grit fingernail sanding stick, testing against the gun every so often. You can finish the edges with the "buffing" surface on another fine grit fingernail sanding stick or so-called emory board. Go slowly, and don't try to rush the job or you may get it too small with one extra swipe on the coarse or medium grit. As it gets closer I like to switch to finer grit which cuts more slowly.

This Polly takes a very good polish. Sand gently with the 320, wet. Then switch to the 400, wet, 600 wet and final polish with 1500, wet or a muslin wheel with white jewelers polish. The poly will clean up well after a day's shooting with warm soapy water and a soft cloth. Take the grips off when you clean the weapon. I soaked a sample of the Poly in Acetone for two days with very little effect, but you worked hard to make the grips look good, don't jeopardize the finish on them by soaking them in cleaning fluid.

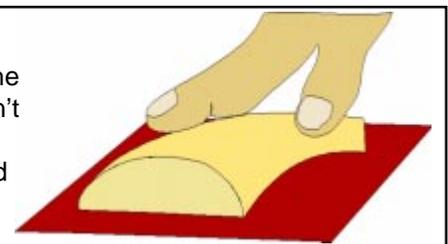
Black grips tend to show sanding line, every tiny pore in the material, until you buff them with black shoe wax. That fills the tiny pits that you can't see in natural ivory and most other colors. Buff the black polish hard and fast with a small hairbrush or a denture brush, to set the wax and keep it from rubbing off. You can do this anytime to restore scuffed areas on a black grip. Try to go with the checkering lines rather than across them, on checkered grips.

If you should get a set of grips that is too small for your gun, please don't do anything to them. Just check, and if they are too small, send them back with an outline of your existing grips traced on a piece of paper, or a tracing of the metal grip frame or as much of it as you can get. With that, I can try to locate another set of grips that might be a little larger. Even the same model from the same company may be a little different size from one example to another, especially some of the replica imports. They are great guns but the grip frames tend to be more or less "hand shaped" it appears, at least in certain models.

I'm quite used to the idea that an 1858 Remington from Uberti and one from Pietta might have different curves and sizes of grips not only from each other, but from another gun of the same brand and model! That's why I put the measurements on the listings, so you can check first before you order. It is why I stress checking the size before you do anything else. You can always send back UNMODIFIED grips for refund or replacement at your option. If you start sanding on them, and only then discover they are too small, it's not likely anyone else will want them now. If they are not modified, there are thousands of other guns they will fit just fine, and there is no problem taking them back.

Pearl grips are not polished when you get them. They won't look nearly as good as when you are done. Don't give up on their appearance right out of the box! They are not meant to be "finished" yet. That comes after they are fitted to the gun and assembled into one piece. THEN you can wet sand and/or buff them with jeweler's rouge (white is best) and a soft muslin wheel until they gleam with luster and depth. The frosty surface and dull look is caused by tiny surface pores that are not yet smoothed over or filled. Even a coat of car wax will greatly increase the shine and depth, but a good polish and buffing will be more permanent!

Sanding the back of a grip flat: use 100-120 grit sandpaper glued or tacked to a flat board, and gently rub the grip over the sandpaper while keeping it flat. Check the back until you don't see any shine at the edges indicating a lower edge than the rest of the grip. Don't use a power sander! One extra second can ruin the grip if you tip it while power sanding.



**Important note:**

Grips are often thicker than you want, or one grip may be thicker than the other. This is not a defect, it is just the surplus material left to insure that you can sand both grips to the same desired size. As long as the grip outline is larger than your grip frame on the gun, you can sand it to fit. If it is smaller, don't even attempt to sand it. Just send it back. If you want to send a pencil tracing of your existing grip that does fit the gun, then I can use it to match another grip that is large enough, and give you an exchange. I will pay the shipping to send you the exchange. If you want a refund of the grip price (less shipping costs), please send a copy of your invoice and mark it "refund".