Fitting and Finishing Your Tombstone Grip Kit

Hold the grip panels against the frame of your gun, align at the top, and use a sharp pencil or fine marker pen to mark on the back of the grip any areas where the grip is larger than the frame. You want the grips to be larger so you can sand to a perfect fit.

Use a coarse-grit fingernail sanding board, or a sanding wheel on a Dremel tool, to carefully remove any surplus material up to the line. Larger areas can be cut away with a file, a fine tooth saw, or other tool suitable for woodworking. In most cases, a coarse fingernail sanding board is sufficient (80-120 grit).

When the grip outline is very close to the frame size, change to a medium grit (180-220) and bring the edge of the grip to the edge of the gun frame a few strokes at a time, testing the fit, and repeating. Slow careful work will give the best results.

Once you are satisfied with the outline, use the fine (300 to 400 grit) portion of a 4-part fingernail sanding board to smooth and polish the edge. Finish with the super-fine (500-600 or finer) portion of the multi grit sanding board. Individual pieces of automobile finishing abrasive paper or fabric can also be used, wrapped around a wooden stick. (An ideal form is a half-circle made from a 1-inch dowel, which gives you one flat side and one half-round side to sand the curved portions). An average time to fit the grip is about 30 minutes.

Many gun frames use projecting pins to stabilize the grip, so it won't rotate about the mounting screw. To properly locate and make the matching hole for your gun, "paint" the tip of the pin with a Magic Marker. Whilte the ink is still damp, press the grip into position on the gun. This transfers a dot to the back of the grip, indicating where to make the hole.

A drill press can be used, but it is safer to use a small grinding bur (cylinder shaped) to create the hole. Twist drills tend to grab and pull into the grip unless the grip is firmly held. Grinding bits or burs do not pull and are easier to control.

If the hole is made too large, or not quite in the right position, you can fill it with a drop of 5-minute epoxy glue such as comes in two tubes, mixed just before use. These are available at nearly all hardware stores. If you wipe a film of Vasoline on the gun frame and pin, wait until the epoxy is starting to set but is still soft, and then press the grip onto the gun, the pin will make its own hole in the epoxy. Allow the epoxy to set up firmly before removing the grip. If for any reason epoxy glue gets onto the gun, use acetone to dissolve and wipe it off. Acetone is often used as a fingernail polish remover. Tombstone grip material is highly resistant to acetone so you can wipe the back of the grips lightly with it to remove any smears or surplus epoxy.

Some grips have space in the frame area for a thin spacer, which can be epoxy glued to the back of the grip and used instead of a pin. Two edges of the spacer should be against the ID of the frame. That will keep the grips from moving in two directions. If the top of the gun frame stops the grip from moving up, then a spacer that bears against the inside bottom edge will lock it from moving down.

It is easier to locate the spacer by holding the grip on the gun and placing the spacer inside the frame, with a thin coating of epoxy glue applied. Having a film of Vasoline on the gun frame will keep the epoxy from sticking to it. Do one side at a time and allow the epoxy to set firmly before removing the grip and doing the other side. Often a grip that was designed with a plastic pin fitting into a hole in the frame can be made more stable than the original design by using spacers instead of installing pins. Buff the finished grips with clear car wax.