

# YOU CAN DO IT EASY UPGRADES

by Randy Irwin

## 1955-64 REAR AXLE BEARING INSTALLATION



### Randy Irwin - Technical Writer

Randy has been involved in the Chevy parts business for over 25 years. He is a wizard at creating, making and modifying custom parts for Chevs.

The rear axle bearings that are used on a 1955 to 1964 are a "press-on" style ball bearing. The bearing supports the axle in the rear end housing and also serves as the seal and axle retainer. An O-ring around the outside of the bearing seals to the rear end housing, while a lip seal is located on the outside face of the bearing that keeps rear end lube inside the housing. When an axle bearing starts to leak (usually because the bearing cage is disintegrating) the rear end lube will ruin the rear brake shoes. If the bearing becomes loose, it will start to roar and possibly ruin the axle and/or rear end housing. In this article we will show the proper way to remove and install new rear axle bearings.



### Parts List:

21-23 1955-56 Axle Bearing

21-24 1957 Axle Bearing

521012 1958-64 Axle Bearing

03-32 1955-57 Axle Flange Gaskets

563026 1958-64 Axle Flange Gaskets

To order parts call 1-800-456-1957 or visit [ClassicChevy.com](http://ClassicChevy.com)

To order parts call 1-800-683-1961 or visit [LateGreatChevy.com](http://LateGreatChevy.com)

### Tools Needed:

Hammer & Chisel

Hydraulic Press

9/16" Wrench

Axle Puller

### Time Frame:

2 hours



**Photo 1:** Remove the rear wheels, brake drums and loosen the four nuts that secure the axle retaining plate to the rear end. Using an axle puller, remove the axles from the rear end housing. The axle bearing is pressed onto the axle and is held in place with a pressed-on retaining ring.

**Photo 2:** To remove the axle bearing, the retaining ring must be removed first. The retaining ring is made out of fairly soft material. Place the axle in a vice. Using a sharp chisel and hammer, split the retaining ring.



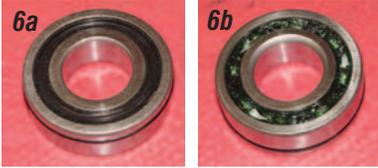
**Photos 3a & 3b:** The axle bearing cover has four studs that hold the axle to the rear end housing. These must be removed to allow the bearing to be pressed off. Using a hammer, tap the studs out of the bearing cover.



**Photos 4a, 4b & 4c:** A hydraulic press must be used to remove the axle bearing. Before applying any pressure to the bearing, wrap a heavy towel or rag over the bearing. If the bearing breaks while being pressed off, the towel will retain any broken pieces and help prevent any injury to you.

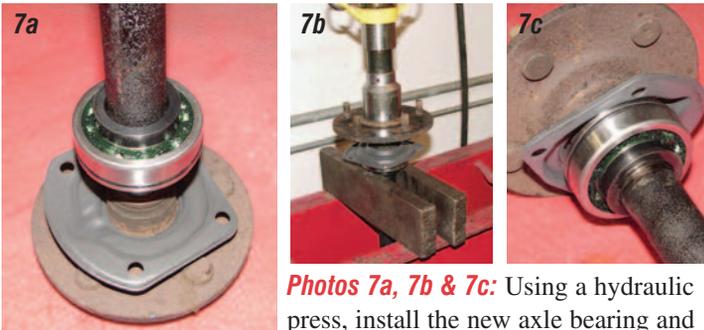


**Photos 5a, 5b & 5c:** The axle bearing cover has a gasket P/N 03-32 or 563206 that keeps the brake dust away from the axle bearing. These gaskets should always be replaced. We cleaned our bearing cover and painted it chassis black.



**Photos 6a & 6b:** The new bearing P/N 21-24 has a grease seal on one side of the bearing and is open on the other side. This type of bearing will be lubricated by the rear end lube. Some manufacturers supply a replacement bearing that has a seal on one side and a shield on the other. This means the bearing is permanently sealed and will not use the rear end lube as the lubricant. If the bearing is permanently sealed, the sealed side will go to the outside of the axle housing and the shielded side will go to the inside of the axle housing.

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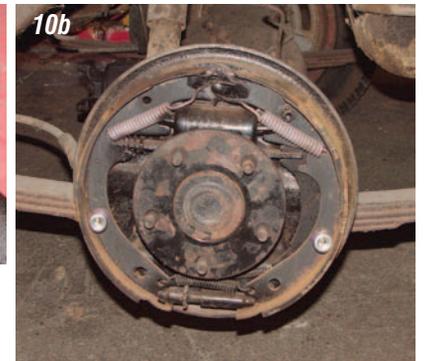


**Photos 7a, 7b & 7c:** Using a hydraulic press, install the new axle bearing and bearing retainer making sure to press the bearing and retainer on until they will go no further.



**Photo 8:** To install the axle retaining plate studs, simply stack up about seven or eight washers on the stud and using the backing plate nuts pull the studs into place.

**Photo 9:** The gaskets used on the axle bearing cover keep any brake dust from getting to the axle bearing and damaging the bearing or seal. This seal does not retain rear end lube.



**Photos 10a & 10b:** Before installing the axle into the rear end, lubricate the O-ring on the outside of the bearing with a light grease to help keep the O-ring from being damaged.

With new axle bearings, the rear end will be nice and quiet and will not leak. New rear axle bearings are a must if you want a nice, reliable classic for those long road trips!

Good Luck! ✓