

Tombstone Gun Grips

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Bersa 380, Llama MiniMax, other relieved back styles:

The Tombstone Grip Kit is a flat-backed grip. It may require routing on the back to remove some material, for clearance of the gun's operating controls.

This can be done most easily with a Dremel "Moto-Tool" and a rotary burr cutter. Secure the grip with a padded clamp or screw it to a board using the mounting hole. A dowel driven into the board to act as a stop will keep the grip from rotating while you work on it.

With the grip secured so it can't turn, carefully grind or rout the areas where the grip would interfere with the operating controls on the gun. Reduce the thickness at these spots a little at a time, and try the grip on the gun, until it fits and clears the controls easily. Don't press too hard or try to cut too much at once. To smooth the area where you have cut, lightly "brush" a fine grinding bit over the area to make it even and smooth. The fine carbide or diamond grinding bits remove very little material but are able to level out a roughed surface. A regular edged cutting wheel, or end-cutter, will remove material faster.

A simple way to get a good pattern for removing material from the back of a flat grip can be made by cutting out a paper tracing around the grip, and then pressing the paper cut-out against the gun. Lightly rub the paper with a smooth stick or rounded-end plastic rod, or the round end of a plastic fork or spoon, so that the paper picks up an impression of the high points and control levers. These are the areas you will want to grind away with the Dremel tool.

Locating Grip Alignment Pin Holes

The alignment pins used on some grips may not always be the same size or in the same location for a given model. Over time, the manufactures sometimes change pin sizes or locations. Since the pin hole in the back of the grip is critical to keeping the grip aligned, it is best for you to make this shallow hole once you have the grip sanded to exact fit on your gun. You can do it better and more accurately because you have the gun as the ultimate gauge.

A twist drill tends to pull itself through the material before you know it. It is better to make the hole with a flat bit or a Dremel tool grinding bit. Make the hole as close to the size of the pin as you can. Locate the hole by putting Magic Marker ink on the end of the pin, then aligning and pressing firmly down on the grip to transfer the ink to the back of the grip.

If you accidentally make the hole in the wrong place, or make it too large, don't worry. You can simply fill the hole with a dab of 5-minute epoxy, let it cure for a few hours so it is good and hard, and then make a new hole. If the hole is just a bit too large, but in the right place, you can wipe the gun frame and pin with a film of Vaseline Petroleum Jelly and fill the hole with epoxy, the press the grip against the gun to make a new hole. The grip should be "down" and the gun on top, so the epoxy doesn't run down into the frame. Do one side at a time and wait for it to cure before doing the other side.

Alignment holes are not hard to create, but these little tricks will make it easier.