

How to Install Body Side Molding – 4 Easy Steps

Body Side Molding Installation Guide

Body side molding does double duty when it comes to your vehicle's aesthetic value. On one hand, body side molding adds a custom look to your car or truck, creating lines and angles that set it apart from similar models straight from the dealership. Consider chrome body side molding, which can bring sharp and shiny definition to a two-door workhorse, a four-door passenger transport, or whatever you've got. On the other hand, auto body side molding also protects the paint, acting as a guard against things that go bump in the parking lot.

What is Body Side Molding?

Body side molding from Cowles can be considered a "protective accent." It comes in the form of a strip with adhesive on one side and an attractive, uniform surface on the other. The adhesive is 3M pressure sensitive acrylic foam attachment tape, which allows for a tight, secure bond. The side facing out toward the rest of the world may be black or silver, rounded or flat. There are many sizes, colors, and styles to choose from, in fact, all of which will serve as a barrier that can keep car doors, runaway shopping carts, and other hazards from scratching or chipping the paint on your own vehicle's side.

Some cars come with body side molding already installed, but many do not. Dealerships may offer it as an option—an "extra" or "bonus" that adds to the price tag—but body side molding is something that you yourself can purchase and install, saving money, investing in the life of your vehicle, and exercising complete control over the look and security of your paint job, trim, and accessories.

Body Side Molding Placement

Each make and model of a car, truck, SUV, or van should have its own manufacturer-recommended body side molding type and placement guidelines. With Cowles' body side molding, universal styles can be applied to any vehicle, though you may still want to research the recommended installation details.

For style reasons, body side molding should be placed wherever it will enhance your car's appearance. Chrome trim is another popular choice for people looking to add an aesthetic edge.

For paint protection reasons, think about the places your own vehicle is most likely to get dinged. The doors are obvious selections, but even then, there's a lot of body to cover. Consider that the areas that stick out the farthest are the ones that suffer the most impacts. These areas are where body side molding should be applied. Think of it like suiting up your car or truck for a contact sport. You don't wrap the players in bubble wrap; you protect the most exposed and/or vulnerable parts with knee and elbow pads, wrist guards, and a helmet.

The molding's flexibility allows it to curve and bend to fit the exact contours of your ride, so it can hug the side for the length of your vehicle.

Body Side Molding for Cars

Car body side molding comes in a variety of colors to either match or complement your existing paint job. There's a range of sizes, too, with fine-line and mid-line options for a subtle look. The universal style will, as the name implies, work with any vehicle with its flat, basic surface, but it's not the only option. Other styles include European, which has a more pronounced slope, as well as round, trapezoidal, and pyramid shapes. The caprice and taurus options bear a groove that adds visual dimension.

Body Side Molding for Trucks

Truck body side molding, like its car counterpart, is available for color matching—but remember that it comes in chrome, too. Since trucks tend to be bigger, drivers are often looking for molding to match. There's a bold-line option, as well as body side molding sizes that range up to 2 inches. Note that not every color is available in every style, so be sure to double-check that the kind you want comes in the tone you want.

Body Side Molding Installation

Step 1

First, keep in mind that the ideal temperature for this work is 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Mark the exact area you want to install the body side molding by outlining it with a tape that can safely adhere to your car's paint without damaging it during removal. Painters tape should work, but you may want to test it first on an inconspicuous area, just to be sure. Once satisfied with your choice of tape, and with the precise location of your body side molding, run a long strip of tape just above the length of the area. When the time comes for installation, you can just follow the line by applying your molding directly under the lower edge of the tape.

Step 2

Prepare this area by removing any and all dust, grease, soot, or grime from where you want the body side molding to stick. Cleaning it well with soap and water, then drying it effectively with a lint-free cloth is the minimum requirement for this step. You should also use a car-paint-safe solvent to remove any trace of oils or other greasy residue to provide an ideal surface for the body side molding adhesive. Use a 50/50 mixture of rubbing alcohol and water on a soft cloth to clean the surface.

Step 3

Cut the molding to the proper lengths to fit where it's needed. We recommend using shears for a clean, quick cut. Peel the backing off of the first stretch of body side molding to be applied, then begin sticking it to the vehicle at the pre-set line. Move slowly but evenly, smoothing out the molding with steady pressure as you go to ensure that it stays level and straight. Avoid touching the adhesive side or allowing any dirt or debris to come into contact with it during the installation. Once the entire strip has been applied, run a soft cloth along it from start to finish.

Step 4

Remove the guiding tape, and allow the body side molding adhesive to sit for several days before washing the car or otherwise allowing the strips to be disturbed. Once the molding is firmly in place, the only thing left to do is drive!