

Repainting a Rusted Hitch

I want to repaint the hitch/frame on our family's 1970's Sovereign Airstream.

I have been searching the Internet and apparently there are two common solutions. Either clean everything and repaint or use a special paint that you use directly on the rust.

Can anyone offer a bit of advice? I couldn't figure out which option is better and the +/- of each solution (outside the obvious easiness and time).

Response: Both options are on the table but if you are wanting something that looks good and will last over time, I would go with sanding, priming the metal and repainting with a quality exterior (UV) paint.



The first thing is to determine if you will be touching up a small spot or doing the complete hitch (a-frame)/frame. If you just have a small spot rusted, you can just sand and hit with some primer and then some matching paint.

If the a-frame looks like the above picture and you want your work to last for a longer period, you will want to remove all the rust and treat the metal with some type of primer.

When doing the complete a-frame, you will want to remove the gas bottles and any brackets for the equalizer hitch. You may also want to remove any clamps holding the gas line or 7-way cord to the a-frame so you can sand and prime any rust starting under the clamps. If the hitch brackets are rusted, they will need refinished also to keep your new paint job from being stained from the rust on the brackets.

Getting Started

Tools to consider: wire brush/wire wheel, sand paper and a disc sander.

Supplies: Masking tape, rags and alcohol for cleaning metal before painting; primer and finish paint. • Loosen rust with wire brush or wire wheel.

- Sand the metal using an 80-grit sandpaper and then follow up with a finer grit such as 120 grit. If there are still pits from the rust and you want a smooth finish, you may want to fill those areas with Bondo and sand.
- Clean area you will be painting in to remove all dirt and loose material that can get in the paint when spraying or brushing.
- Wash the metal with a degreaser: such as a citrus based cleaner making sure the surface is completely free of any contaminants.

- Wipe surface with denatured alcohol or the like and finish cleaning the surface.
- Prepare area for painting, drop cloth or tape paper over areas you want to protect from splatter or overspray.
- Select a rust inhibiting primer (such as POR15 or Rustoleum Rusty Metal Primer) and apply with a brush so you can get a complete coverage.
- Once the primer has been applied and dried, you are ready to apply the final coats of paint. If you have a 1970's, the original color on the A-frame would have been a silver color, in later years, it changed to a charcoal or pewter gray color and on the new 2017 models it is a black color.

Whatever paint you choose it should match the primer (oil based or latex) and have up inhibitors for exterior use. Airstream still has the original colors of paint available for your Airstream, but if you want another less expensive alternative, I would suggest going to Lowes or Home Depot and check out **Rustoleum Hammer finish spray paint**. The paint comes in various colors that will closely match your original color and has a somewhat textured finish that will help cover any imperfections.

Once you have refinished your a-frame and brackets and have them looking new, you may want to protect them so they will stay looking good. As you travel you are going to get stone chips in the paint on you're a-frame and if left untreated, it is an opening for rust to return.

One product that will help seal the chips and provide protection against rust returning is Boeshield T-9.

Just clean the surface every couple of months and spray T-9 on and wipe off the excess for immediate use. T-9 dries to a waxy, waterproof finish without leaving a sticky film to attract dirt, dust or mud. It provides a thin, penetrating film of waterproof protection and lubrication that lasts.

I use this on my trailer as well as on my farm machinery, it works. We hope these responses will get you going in the right direction.

