

FACTORY-DIRECT: GETTING THE PERSONAL TOUCH

MotorHome

Travel, Tech, Lifestyle – For the RV Enthusiast

August 2015

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TOP FABRICS TO
KEEP YOUR RV'S
INTERIOR COOL



IT'S A SNAP!

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By Owen Mitchell

SUN DIFFUSION

Installing custom-cut shade mesh on motorhome windows is made practical and simple with kits from EZ Snap Direct — no drilling required

Since motorhomes aren't built like houses, with thick walls and lots of insulation, we're often looking for ways to keep the hot sun from streaming through our ample — and often large — windows, without having to draw the shades.

Shade mesh is one of the best answers — polyethylene fabric, attached to the window frame on the outside, partially blocking the sun. This type of mesh has been marketed for years to homes in hot regions and is available in a variety of con-

figurations including drop shades from awnings, and windshield covers for motorhomes. Depending on the weave, the mesh may block 50 to 90 percent of the sun's rays, greatly reducing heat and UV damage while still allowing daytime visibility and

some airflow.

While installation of shade mesh on windows usually requires mounting twist-locks on the side walls and grommets in the fabric to allow removal for travel, a company out of Oroville, Washington, and Vernon, British Columbia, Canada, EZ Snap Direct, offers kits that simplify the process with the use of unique three-piece snaps that are easy to install and require no drilling.



[1] A metal tool for prying off the snaps and a special white pencil for marking snap locations on the window frames and cut lines on the fabric are provided with each kit. [2] Studs that mount on window frame (or wall) are available in black, beige or white colors. [3] Rubbing alcohol is used to clean frames before attaching studs.

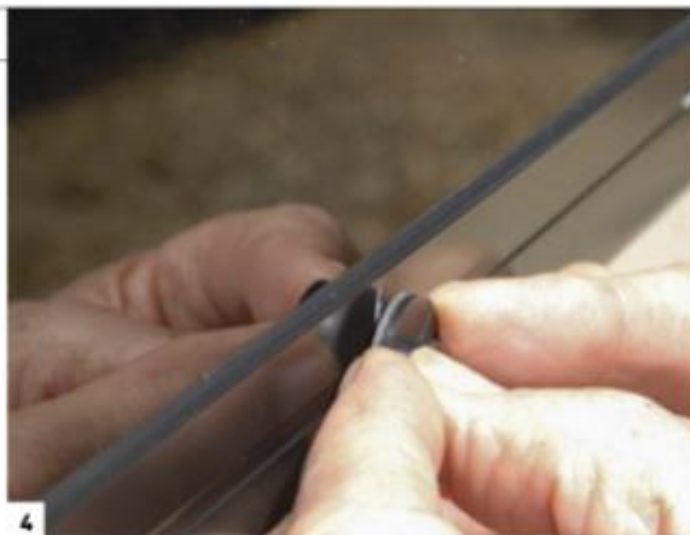
[4] Studs use 3M VHB double-sided adhesive tape for mounting on frames or walls. The tape is strong, meaning users don't have much leeway for relocating the stud once it touches the frame. [5] Moderate pressure is applied to the studs after sticking to the frame surface. The manufacturer recommends allowing the studs to sit for 15 minutes or so to ensure a good bond. Studs can be removed down the road, but it takes some effort.

The snaps, which are key to facilitating the installation for a do-it-yourselfer, are included with shade mesh kits marketed by the company. Once the three-piece snaps are assembled, they look like buttons and remain on the fabric. The EZ Snap mesh fabric can be custom cut for use on windows, windshields, skylights, wheel housings (protecting tires) and any other sun-shielding use that seems practical.

We chose a kit with 75 sets of snaps (caps, pins and adhesive studs) plus a 15-by-6-foot piece of black mesh for cut-to-fit application on large windows that even though tinted, admitted too much direct sun and heat.

The company offers optical-grade mesh that it rates at 90 percent sun blockage — black because it's the best for see-through from the interior of the motorhome. The kit also includes a special marking pencil (handy while cutting the material to size) and a tool with which to easily pry off the snaps and remove the mesh from the windows.

The adhesive studs utilize 3M VHB double-sided adhesive tape that is very strong, yet unobtrusive when attached to plastic window frames, or to metal, fiberglass or glass. Snaps are available in black, beige or white.



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[6] At first, the studs were placed on the radius of the window frame as a starting point, but we modified that for better symmetry after installing the first screen. [7] It is recommended that the snaps be spaced 9-12 inches apart. White pencil makes it easy to find location marks. [8, 9] Once the studs are placed and secure, special pins are pushed into each stud. It takes some effort to push the pins over the stud, so we used a ratchet socket after our fingers became sore. [10] When measuring for cutting the fabric, it's best to add one-half inch to the numbers.



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[11] A large table is used to stretch out the fabric for measuring and cutting. It's best to follow the fabric weave when cutting to make sure the material ends up square. [12] White pencil is used to mark cut lines and to identify the side of the fabric that will be placed against the window.

Calculating the amount of mesh and number of snaps needed for a specific motorhome takes some planning and the EZ Snap website features instructions that can help with this process. The company recommends that the snaps should not be spaced more than 12 inches apart. It also recommends that one-half inch be added to window width and height measurements to make up for possible slight errors in cutting the mesh. Obviously, accurate measurements are necessary.

After cleaning window moldings with isopropyl alcohol, we chose to place snaps on the window corners when installing the first mesh, and then later modified the process to stick the snaps on either side of window corners, which seemed to add a little more symmetry to the look of the installation. We spaced the snaps 9-12 inches apart. The adhesive studs are easy to apply, after which cleverly designed pins are pressed onto the studs.

Although we measured precisely, our mesh cuts turned out to be a fraction of an inch off — the cut fabric was not quite square. But with the additional one-half inch to play with on all sides, the errors were not visible. While measuring and cutting, it seemed best to follow the weave of the mesh.

To install the mesh, EZ Snap recommends beginning

at one corner when pressing the fabric over the pins, which punctures the mesh, then working downward. The fabric should not be stretched across the pins. The caps are then pressed into place on the pins, which protrude through the mesh. Basically, you're building the caps with the fabric in place, so there is no guesswork in matching up the buttons to the studs on the window. During the process of pushing the pins through the fabric, if necessary the mesh can be removed from pins and reinstalled for minor readjustments.

We used the special tool supplied in the kit to pop the pins off the studs and remove the mesh for travel — a procedure that goes very quickly. It's necessary to mark each window covering for reinstallation if any are identical in size, because placement of the snaps will not be precisely the same from one identical window to the next.

Inside the motorhome, the sun's glare and heat were dramatically reduced while see-through was relatively good. The mesh noticeably reduced airflow through the slider window panel at the bottom of the

➔ INSTALLATION TIP

Follow the natural lines of the fabric weave when cutting to size. A sharp scissors is mandatory, and take your time; using a bright light is very helpful.



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[13] The fabric is pushed over the pins before [14] the caps are seated. Tiny barbs in the pins keep the cap from backing out. It's best to start at one corner and work downward. [15] Metal tool is used to dislodge snaps on fabric from the mounting studs. This process goes very fast.



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[16] The newly cut and installed screens look nice on the windows and while they block 90 percent of the sun's rays, [17] the optical-grade mesh allows good visibility to the outside.

large windows, which means a fan such as those made by Fan-Tastic Vent would be needed to accelerate air circulation, or the mesh could be sized short enough (studs attached to glass) to leave the slider uncovered. At night, the mesh only partially blocks the view from the outside with interior lights on.

We found the EZ Snap approach to sun protection easy to install, effective in reducing the sun's heat-soak of the interior, and potentially good for protecting the interior of the motorhome from sun damage — a good choice not only for use in campgrounds but also when the motorhome is in storage.

The kit we chose is priced at \$269.99 including shipping. Snaps can be ordered separately in 15-, 30- or 60-pack sizes for \$1.99, \$1.30 or \$.83 per snap, respectively, if the buyer chooses to use shade mesh of another color from a different source. 

For More Information

EZ Snap Direct
877-439-7627, www.ezsnapdirect.com

IMPORTANT INSTALLATION NOTE : (ERRORS IN ARTICLE)

The article shows mounting the adhesive studs on the frame of the RV. This is not the correct place to mount them. They should be placed around the perimeter of the RV window frame on the flat surface of the RV body. If the RV body surface is textured or not flat, then the window frame may be the only place you can mount them.

Example on adhesive position in the image below.

