

Alfa Romeo 159 TBi – Changing rear brakes

I changed my rear brakes yesterday and thought I'd describe the task – as all I could find online was an out-of-date manual that needed a vmware installation to run and gave the wrong direction for screwing in the piston. Forum requests for guidance were met by silly comments like 'it's an easy job' rather than constructive advice or instructions.

It was a long job, as I undid the wrong thing & had a hard time getting things back together ... so I didn't take photos. My guess is that this job should take 1-2 hours, including a disc change.

Caveats

Bolt Torques

I didn't use a torque wrench, as I didn't have any info on required torques. I just did bolts up hard ... If anyone knows the approved torques, contact me or post them.

Brake fluid reservoir

Everybody recommends lowering brake fluid level and/or keeping an eye on the reservoir to avoid overflow when pushing pistons into calipers. I didn't reduce the fluid level and found that there was no overflow – but I've ended up with a higher fluid level. **Your mileage may vary.**

Model differences

The manual I looked at said to turn the piston anti-clockwise to retract it, but my car (2011 build – 2009 model) required both pistons to turn clockwise. I've seen forum advice that on some cars, one side turns clockwise and the other anti-clockwise. Thankfully I'd bought the complete kit (with both clockwise & anti-clockwise tools) rather than the single tool. Your car may not work the same as mine.

You will need:

Change brake pads only:

- Suitable jack (the standard car jack will do)
- Jack stands
- Chocks (e.g. bricks, blocks of wood)
- 13mm socket / ring spanner
- 15mm open spanner
- Pry bar/large screwdriver
- Brake caliper piston rewind tool.
Note: People on the web say that this can be improvised. I would far rather use the proper tool – can't see any easy improvisation, and the tool was very easy to use, once I was turning in the right direction.
- New pads and steel clips. My pads also came with four replacement bolts with thread locker coating.
- Recommended: 8 x 1.25mm metric tap and die for cleaning threads (die only required if reusing bolts).

If also changing discs:

- Female E12 Torx socket. Ratchet recommended, as existing thread-locker made turning bolts hard work, but use a non-ratchet bar for initial loosening and final tightening (my 3/8" drive 8"/200mm bar was sufficient to start the bolt undoing, but took a lot of effort).
- Recommended: 10 x 1.25mm metric tap and die for cleaning threads.

- 5mm Hex key
- Spray penetrant, e.g. Inox, WD40
- Medium strength (blue) thread-locker

Preparation

1. Loosen wheel nuts. Chock front wheels.
2. Jack up car (jacking point should be obvious, steel square 'turrets' forward of rear wheels under door sill). JACK FROM SIDE ONLY, not the rear. Place axle stands under suspension members near wheels & lower jack. Rock the car to confirm stability.
3. Remove rear wheels. Lay them outside side up to avoid scratching.
4. Ensure handbrake is released.

Remove pads

1. Identify two 13mm bolt heads at top and bottom of the inside of the brake assembly. These horizontal bolts are the only ones you need to remove to access the brake pads.
2. Use 13mm socket or spanner to remove these bolts while holding the nut just inside the bracket with a 15mm open spanner.
3. Prise the caliper away from the disc.
4. Remove old pads.
5. Remove steel clips if you have new ones or are replacing the disc.

If replacing disc

1. Spray penetrant around centre of disc where it meets the hub, and around the hex grub screw and two Torx head bolts & leave for 15 minutes
2. Remove hex screw from disk
3. Prise disc from hub using pry bar between disc and brake bracket.
Note - you cannot remove the disc at this stage – but it is best to move it before you remove the brake bracket and lose a good anchor for prising it loose (mine were rusted tight, but prising them away was easy). Leave the disk on the hub.
4. Remove the Torx head bolts and remove the bracket.
5. Remove the old disc
6. Place new disk on hub, aligning bolt holes
7. Replace the hex screw (thread- locker recommended)
8. Recommended: Clean the bolt & bracket threads with a tap & die to remove old thread-locker. I had great problems starting the 10mm Torx head bolts in the bracket threads until I did this & then had no trouble at all.
9. Replace the bracket (thread- locker on the 10mm bolts recommended).

Replace pads

1. Install steel clips into bracket
2. Install new pads into clips
3. Using piston rewind tool, rewind piston into caliper until it is seated
4. Recommended: Clean the 8mm threads in the caliper (you'll need to hold the hex nut with the 15mm spanner). If you are re-using the old bolts, clean these also.
5. Replace caliper and install the two 8mm bolts(thread- locker recommended)

Finish job

1. Replace wheels & tighten wheel bolts as well as you can
2. Jack up car to remove each axle stand & lower onto wheels.

3. Tighten all wheel bolts
4. Clean yourself up (you will be filthy at this stage & don't want to mess up the car)
5. Pump the brake pedal to fill the calipers / move the pads to the discs
6. Work the hand brake a number of times until it has self-adjusted to normal movement
7. Remove the chocks (it's not good to forget this ...)
8. Test drive the car – gently applying brakes – to check operation
9. Allow the pads and discs to 'bed in' together by avoiding un-necessary harsh braking for the next 160km (100 miles) or so