DIY Dork Tutori-O: How to Make a Vintage Hubcap Clock

“How to Make a Vintage Hubcap Clock”

Disclaimer

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Introduction

Hey! Kevin here... I just wanted to say thanks for checking out this Tutori-O!

In the following pages, I'll show you how to make a vintage hubcap clock with a few basic parts and tools. It's a fairly simple project that anyone can make, and it only takes about 30 minutes or so to finish.

(You can also watch a video of me making the clock [HERE](#) too.)

I actually made the clock pictured above as a Christmas present for my dad. His favorite car is a 1950 Plymouth Convertible, so I thought he'd like one of these to hang in his room full of old car collectibles.

I searched on online for a hubcap off one of these cars and eventually found a few on Ebay. Most of them were in the $35-50 range, but I found this one for just $10 + $9 shipping. Not bad! It did have several dings, scrapes, & general patina all over it, but I thought it was pretty cool when I saw it in person. It's seen thousands of miles on the road and has some real history behind it.

Plus, it's a little too rough to be used on a car again, so I felt zero guilt about drilling a hole in it and upcycling it into a cool, vintage a wall clock.

Alright, so with that said... how about I show you how to make it?
Materials & Tools

You'll only need a few supplies & tools to make your vintage hubcap clock. Besides the actual hubcap and clock parts, you probably have everything else in your house already except maybe the instant epoxy & picture hanger.

You'll need:

- Hubcap
- Clock Kit
- Longer Clock Hands (optional)
- Metal D-Ring Picture Hanger
- Instant Epoxy
- Masking Tape
- Measuring Tape
- Pen, Pencil, or Marker
- Drill
- Drill Bit
- Spray Paint (optional)

(You can find links to some of these supplies on the Resources Page)
Preparing the Clock Pieces

Since my hubcap was stainless steel and the longer clock hands I planned to use were brass, I decided to spray paint them, so they showed up better.

I painted the hour & minute hands black and the second hand red.

If you plan to paint your clock hands, I recommend doing that first, so they can dry while you're putting the rest of the clock together.

Spray them outside in a well ventilated area and wear a face mask.

I found it works great to paint the back sides first, then once those are dry... flip them over, and spray the front sides.
Place a piece of masking tape over the center of the hubcap, so it will be easier to see the center mark that you're going to measure & mark.

Then you need to measure & find center. This is a 15” hubcap, but because of the curved shape, it measured 15-1/2” with my Cassette Tape Measure. I made a mark at the halfway pint (7-3/4”) with my Sharpie marker.
Then, measure across the hubcap again along the mark you just made, and mark the center in the opposite direction. That crossmark is true center.

On most hubcaps, that center crossmark would be fine to drill a mounting hole. But on this hubcap, I wanted to leave “PLYMOUTH” script alone, so I made another crossmark about 1/2” lower than the true center. (I circled it, so I would remember to drill on that mark later.)
To drill a mounting hole, you need to use a drill bit that just slightly larger in diameter than the threaded shaft on the clock “movement” (ie: the black box).

Carefully place the drill bit on the crossmark, and slowly start drilling with a little bit of pressure. You don't want to push too hard, or you could dent the hubcap. Also, make sure the end of the drill bit doesn't start “walking off” away from your mark, and watch for the metal shavings it will create.
Once you drill the hole, you'll need to look for little burrs that might have formed on the backside of it.

Mine only had one little burr that I was able to fold & snap off with my finger. If for some reason you get a lot of them, you may need to use a piece of sand paper or a small file to smooth them off.

If you don't get rid of them, your clock movement won't sit flush against the surface & will probably give you problems when you try to mount the hands on the front side.
Assembling the Clock

Once your hole is smooth and free of any burrs, it's time to attach the wall hanger to the top of the back side.

I found the easiest way to find the correct hanger position is to grab the hubcap by the top with your thumb & pointer finger, and look at the front side straight on.

When it looks level, use your marker to make a dot on the top of the back side where your finger was. It's also a good idea to use either your drill bit or even a screwdriver to scratch the surface around the area of the dot to create a rougher surface for the epoxy to grip onto.

Then, squeeze a little instant epoxy on the scratched dot area, and press on your metal wall hanger. You may need to hold it in place for a minute or so until the epoxy firms up.

Let it dry for a couple of minutes and it should be strong enough to pick it up by the hanger. If it's still loose, then wait another minute or two until it's got a strong grip before moving on to the next step.
Once the hanger is mounted, you can put together the clock movement kit. Your kit may be different, but on mine, the first step is to put on the little black rubber washer. (I should note that I used a kit designed for a 1/4” thick clock face, so that it wouldn’t stick too far out from the front of the hubcap. This size should work ok for most hubcaps, but may not on some.)

Push the threaded shaft through the hole, and make sure the bottom of the movement on the back side is lined up & level with the bottom of the hubcap. (You want 12:00 to point up to the top of the hubcap.)
Next, slide on the little brass washer if your kit includes one...

... and then screw on the little brass nut. Make sure it’s on tight, so that the clock movement on the back doesn’t move around & twist out of position.
The hour hand goes on first. On my clock kit, the hour hand had a round hole that you push down onto the plastic sleeve. You don’t want to push it all the way down though... it could get stuck on the metal threaded shaft below.

The minute hand goes on next. Mine had a rounded-rectangle hole that fit right over a rounded-rectangle shaped, threaded, center shaft.
Next, screw on the little, brass nut to hold the minute hand on tight.

Finish it off by pushing the second hand down tight into the very center of the middle shaft. My kit also included a closed-end, brass nut that I could have put on instead of the other nut in the previous step, if I didn't want to use my second hand.
Wrap Up

And that’s all there is to it... You now have a cool, vintage, hubcap clock!

If you or someone you know has a favorite old car (or loves vintage automotive design in general)... then I hope this DIY Dork Tutori-O showed you a cool way to take a piece of that car and breath new life into it by turning it into a cool, upcycled clock!

As you just saw, there’s no fancy tools or parts involved, and it only takes about 30 minutes or so to put one together.

You can find old hubcaps in thrift shops, garages, or online ... and the clock parts can be found in most hobby shops or online as well. The metal wall hanger & instant epoxy can be found at any hardware store.

And like I said earlier, you probably have everything else to put it all together.

Have fun making your vintage hubcap clock, and I’d love to see yours when you finish it... feel free to drop me an email!

- Kevin, the “DIY Dork”
Resources

I hunted down a few different places online where you can find parts to make one of these clocks … and then put them together here on this page. Hopefully this will make it a little easier for you to find what you need. :)