Nissan Sentra Rear Wheel Alignment Tricks

Many front wheel drive imports feature independent rear suspensions. Some have a provision for adjusting the rear toe-in, others don't. The 1982-86 Nissan Sentras and 1983-86 Pulsars used a non-adjustable type suspension.

On either of these models, you may encounter two types of unusual rear tire wear. These are:
1) Smooth, even wear on the outside shoulder of the tire. One tire may be worn more than the other one.
2) A diagonal scrub pattern and cupped tread. Either of these types of wear may be accompanied by floor pan vibration at highway speeds. Fore-and-aft movement of the rear spindle, caused by soft rear control arm bushings, creates the vibration.

If the car you are working on falls within the following manufacturing dates, Nissan offers replacement rear springs and control arms to correct these problems. The dates are:
- Japanese-built Sentras built between 9/83-3/85;
- U.S.-built Sentras built between 3/85-6/85;
- Pulsars built between 12/83-3/85.

Cars built after these dates were factory-equipped with the newer parts.

Before installing these service parts, make sure that the rear tire wear was not caused by low or uneven tire pressures, abrasive road surfaces, or frequent overloading of the vehicle.

Parts Information

The new rear spring part number for the Sentra sedan/coupe and the Pulsar is P/N 55020-32A06. The old number was 55020-32A05. The new rear spring part number for the Sentra wagon is P/N 55020-32A09. The old number was 55020-32A07.

The new right rear control arm part number is P/N 55501-02A11. The old number was 55501-03A11. The new left rear control arm part number is P/N 55502-02A11. The old number was 55502-03A11.

—By Lou Reichardt

1

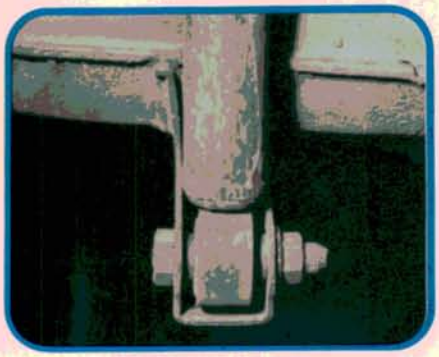
Start by separating the rear brake line where it joins the flexible line and remove the clip holding the fitting to the control arm. You may want to cap or plug the flexible line with a clean suitable rubber cap or plug.

2

Take off the brake drum to get at the four bolts which hold the backing plate to the control arm. Bend back the tab that holds the parking brake cable. Then slide the plate past the spindle and let it hang by the cable, out of the way.

3

Depending upon the age of the vehicle and the local climate, the control arm bolts may or may not be easy to remove. Rust may seize the bolts to the bushings. Just loosen them at this point. Wait until after the next step to remove them.



4

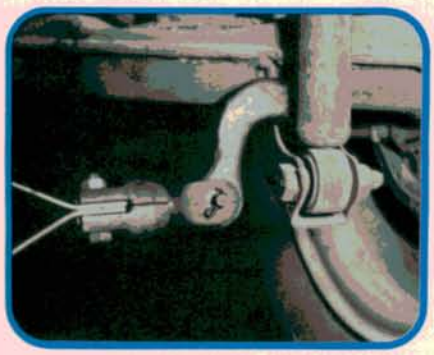
Support the control arm before removing the lower shock bolt. Lower the control arm until you relieve the spring tension, then remove the control arm. On wagon models, replace both the spring and control arm at this point. The new springs improve rear camber on the vehicle.

5

On all other Sentras and Pulsars, Nissan suggests that you replace just the springs, then road test the car to see if the vibration's gone. All the cars I have done ended up needing control arms too! You can do them now or do them later. Don't forget to transfer this snubber to the new control arm.

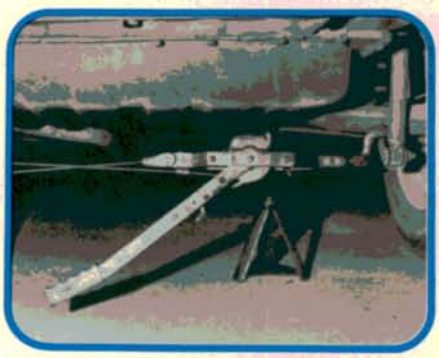
6

After reassembling everything in the reverse order, bleed both rear wheel cylinders. It doesn't take much rust to seize the bleeder screws. You may want to include two wheel cylinders in your price quote if they look bad.



7

Who said this rear suspension wasn't adjustable? Hook a cable hoist to both lower shock mounting points as shown here. Tightening the cable will bring the arms together and set the suspension as close as possible to the preferred total rear toe of zero (plus or minus ¼ degree).



8

I raised the car for this photograph, but you must do this last step with the car on the ground or on a drive-on lift. Tighten the cable until you can feel that you've taken all the slack out of the rear suspension. Then torque all four control arm bolts to 45-51 ft/lbs. Don't bend anything!