# How The TR6 Can Work For A Tall Person

**INTRODUCTION**

I guess most people would find it funny that a 6'5'' guy would have such an interest in British cars. It is quite clear that Mother Nature really intended for me to be behind the wheel of some classic American muscle car. But sometimes your heart is blind to your perceived physical limitations!

When I started to do my "pre-purchase" research on the Triumph TR6, I quickly discovered that there were precious few resources addressing the car from the perspective of tall drivers. And the vast majority of these were simply statements questioning whether a tall person could properly fit in a TR6, most of which seemed to always start out with phrases such as "I'm only 5 foot [something or another], but I don't think…."

**WHY THE TR6 CAN WORK FOR A TALL PERSON**

To make a long story short (no pun intended), after sitting in a few TR6s, I realized that the car could work for a tall person. As most of you know, the TR6 actually has a relatively long interior, which allows for more leg room than one would initially imagine. As I explain to uninformed naysayers, it is actually the width of the car that is limited -- which doesn't present a problem, so long as you are on good terms with any accompanying passenger.

Additionally, the TR6 has something going for it that many modern small cars do not -- a lack of intrusive interior body cladding. The dash and door panels are relatively flat and don't stick too far out taking up valuable space. In comparison, a friend of mine has a Mazda Miata and, because the plastic door panels stick out pretty far to accommodate the electric switches, hoses, and such, when sitting in the driver's seat I can't close the door without my knee being pinned between the door panel and the steering wheel. As a side note, the modern Mini Cooper also lacks such intrusive interior body cladding, which allows me to fit in it without issue (which means my next daily driver will be a Mini!).

**CHANGES YOU CAN MAKE FOR ADDED SPACE**

That said, a stock TR6 can still be a bit tight when you are my size. So through a process of trial and error and consultation with other TR6 owners I've gotten to know through the years, I was able to put together a list of changes to accommodate a tall driver. And, as I said earlier, since I've never really found any good single resource on this topic, I decided that I would put something together so that maybe I can help other tall TR6 owners or persons interested in the car.

Now bear with me, I'm not a mechanic or engineer and I don't even play one on television. So there will likely be room for improvement in how I describe things in this article. This is definitely a work in progress, so any suggested revisions are more than welcome.

Additionally, I'd like to put a big, fat disclaimer here. If you decide to try any of the changes addressed here, you do so entirely at your own risk. I do not warrant or guarantee the safety of these changes. Okay, now that I've got that out of the way, here's my list.

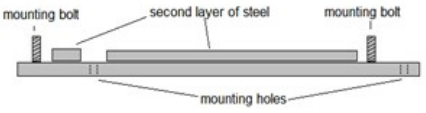
**(1) Moving the Seat**

This is the obvious option. One of the first things I found was that even with the driver's seat pushed back as far as it can go, there is still a good bit of rearward travel possible, especially if you don't lean the seat back too far (obviously, the more you lean the seat back, the closer the backside of the seat is to the hump of the wheel well, limiting rearward travel).

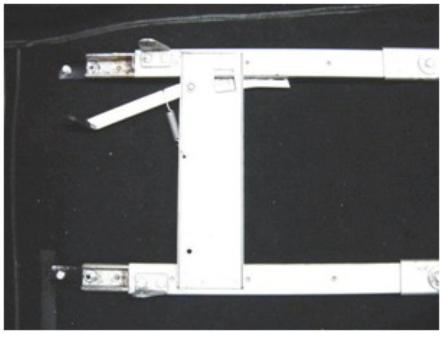
There are several ways you can move the seat further back. First, since the seat track onto which the seat mounts is simply bolted to the floor pan of the car, you can just drill new mounting holes a bit further back. But that approach didn't interest me since it meant a rather permanent change to the car (and really, does a British car, even one in good condition, need more holes?). Plus, the stock mounting holes have nuts welded to the floor pan, so short of welding new nuts to the floor pan for the new holes (and I have no welding talent), installing the seat mechanism with new holes would become a two man job -- one inside the car to tighten the bolt securing the seat track to the floor pan and one person underneath the car to hold the nut in place -- and my wife is tired of being dragged out into the garage to be the "second man."

Short of drilling new holes, what can you do? There are the two other methods of which I know to move the seat further back. One of the first methods I stumbled upon during my internet research is the fabrication of seat extender brackets.

Unfortunately the website documenting how to make the brackets is no longer available, although I still have some of the photos from it.* As can be seen in the illustration below, it is a fairly simple design starting with an 18" long piece of 3/16" by 1" steel. Two mounting holes are drilled into the steel to allow it to be attached to the floor pan using the stock mounting bolts and holes. Additionally, two new mounting bolts are welded onto the top of each bracket to allow the seat tracks to be attached to the bracket using new nuts. A second layer of steel is then welded on top of the bracket in-between the new mounting bolts and holes to create a solid resting surface for the seat track.




The following photos show the brackets installed on the floor pan, the seat track attached to the brackets, and finally the seat attached to the seat track.

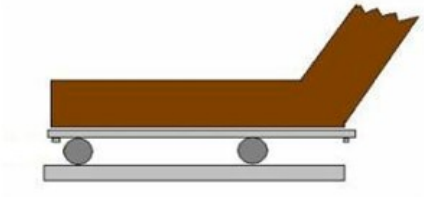


The author of the website claimed that you can get about 1.5" more room while only raising the seat by 3/8".

That approach was appealing, but after doing some work cleaning up the seat sliding mechanisms on my car, I discovered a way to end up with somewhat similar results by simply manipulating the seat sliding mechanism a bit. I like this approach because it requires no real modification to the car or fabrication of any new parts. Additionally, at my height, raising the seat by any amount isn't very attractive.

Bear with me here, because to understand how and why this approach works, you have to understand the different parts of the seat track mechanism. AAs can be seen in the illustration below, the seat track basically consists of two sets of rails which sit on top of each other -- the bottom set of rails that bolt to the floor pan and the top set that are attached to the seat.

In between the bottom and top rails are two metal rollers -- two cylinders with thick rubber-like bands around them. In essence, the top rail rides on these two rollers. As seen in the illustration, when you move your seat forwards or backwards, these metal rollers roll forwards or backwards, allowing the top rails to move while the bottom rails stay put.



As seen in the next photo, on the bottom rails that mount to the floor are a series of square holes into which the sliding mechanism lock engages. When the teeth on the end of the seat sliding lever engage into those holes, then the seat is

locked into place (and conversely, when you pull the seat sliding lever, the teeth pop out of the holes and you can slide the seat).

What I noticed when I moved my seat back as far as I could without reclining the back of the seat was that there were still a few inches of space between the back of the seat and the hump of the wheel well. And more importantly, there were still open square holes further back on the rail. So if I wasn't hitting anything with the back of the seat and the seat locking mechanism should still work if the seat were to be moved further back, what was stopping the seat?

As you can see in the previous illustration, on each top set of rails there are two dimples in the metal -- one in the back and one in the front. These dimples are there to keep you from moving the seat too far forwards or backwards and the two rails becoming disengaged. In other words, if you are moving the seat backwards, it will move until the front metal roller hits the front dimple -- once it hits the dimple, the roller stops rolling and the seat stops moving. And it is the same for the back dimple when you are moving the seat forward.

What I discovered was that I could move the seat as far back as possible -- i.e., until the front rollers were stopped by the front dimples. Then I used a hammer and a long screw driver to gently tap the front rollers back, trying to push each back the same distance.

Once both rollers were tapped back a hair, I was able to slide the seat further back until the rollers once again hit the front dimples. To help force the seat back, I used a scrap piece of wood and mallet to tap on the metal cross bar that connects the rails on each side of the seat track while holding the sliding lock mechanism open. I found this approach worked a bit better than sitting in the seat and trying to push it back in it using my legs.

I did this a couple of times, adjusting the angle of the seat back along the way, and was able to get a decent amount of additional space, still have a comfortable amount of recline, and still have the sliding mechanism lock work properly. Finally, I used a small screw driver that would fit through the square holes in the bottom rail and pushed the rear set of metal rollers back to make sure they weren't too close to the front set of rollers.

The only alteration I made in all of this was a bit of a safety measure. I was unsure how much further back the seat would slide, and since I had the sliding mechanism apart for cleaning, I added a few more square holes to the bottom rail to make sure the sliding lock mechanism would engage no matter how much further back I moved the seat. But in reality, once I had everything installed and moved the seat back, I found that the new holes weren't needed.

Here is an image of me driving the car, which gives you a good idea of how far back I sit now.

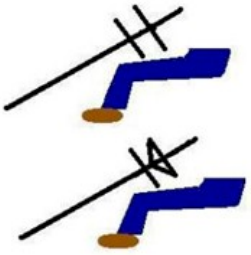
Of course there are a few drawbacks with this approach. With the seat moved so far back, it makes operating either the seat reclining lever or the seat tilt lever hard because each lever is right up against the side of the body of the car (but few other than me drive my TR6, so it doesn't concern me too much).

Additionally, because of the seat belt mountings and the hump of the rear wheel well, when flipping the seat up or putting it back down, you have to watch for rubbing and wear.

**(2) Steering Wheel Alterations**

Aside from moving the seat further back, some of the most helpful changes you can make as a tall driver involve the steering wheel. Basically, the stock steering wheel is large and flat. This is a bad combination for the tall driver. First, the larger the steering wheel, the less room there is for your legs underneath the wheel and on the sides (as a side note, I've heard people talk about having their legs under the steering wheel while they drive. I've never been able to drive any car like that. Even in my daily driver, my legs are always straddling either side of the wheel).

Second, the flatness of the steering wheel also presents a problem. Remember, the steering column is at an angle in relation to your legs. As a result, the closer the steering wheel is to the bottom of the steering column, the closer it is to your legs. The closer the steering wheel is to the top of the steering column, then the further away it is from your legs. The same concept applies to a dished steering wheel. The dish causes the rim of the steering wheel to sit further up the steering column than it would if it where a flat wheel, thus meaning there is more room between the rim and the driver's legs. This illustration where I've extended the steering column beyond the steering wheel may help explain this principle.



**(a) Smaller dished steering wheel**

With this concept in mind, one of the best alterations I made was to install a smaller dished steering wheel (my TR6 came with a really nice E. Nardi model that I would have loved to have kept on the car, but it was just too big). I choose a 13" Mountney model that I purchased from a supplier in England via eBay.

One of the concerns some people have with a smaller diameter steering wheel is the increased effort needed to turn the wheel (the smaller the wheel, the less leverage you have to turn the wheel). However, I can say that I really felt no difference in the amount of force needed to turn the wheel, but then again, I'm a pretty big guy!

**(b) Installing a spacer between the steering wheel and boss**

Another option a fellow TR6 owner suggested is to install a spacer in-between the stock steering wheel and the boss. The concept is based on the previous idea that the farther up the steering column the steering wheel sits, the more room there is for the driver's legs.

With this approach you unbolt the steering wheel from the boss and install some sort of spacer in-between the two. When reinstalled, the addition of the spacer causes the steering wheel to sit closer to the driver. I've personally not tried this, but it might be worth considering if you want to keep the stock steering wheel.

The drawback with this approach is that the horn button stays in its stock location, which means it sits recessed in the center of the steering wheel and is harder to push. Additionally, you will have to replace the original bolts connecting the

steering wheel and boss to account for the increased distance between the two. Finally, some additional modification of the horn button center pad may be needed.

**(c) Installing a Triumph Spitfire steering column**

An option suggested by another TR6 owner is the installation of a pre-1977 Spitfire steering column, which this gentleman noted is almost identical to the TR6 steering column but is about 4.5" longer. Like the two previous ideas, this option is based on the principle that the farther up the steering column the steering wheel sits, the more room there is for the driver's legs. The gentleman who suggested this option said that you can trim the length of the Spitfire's inner column to achieve your desired length, which can put the steering wheel anywhere from an additional 2.5" to 4.5" closer to the driver.

One issue to consider with this change is the wiring cover that mounts to the underside of the steering column and protects the wires coming from the turn signals and headlight switch. The Spitfire column is nearly identical to the TR6 wire cover, only longer. If you trim the length of the Spitfire's inner column to only add an additional 2.5", the stock Spitfire wire cover should be long enough to protect the wires and it still appear close to stock. However, any distance greater than 2.5" would preclude using the stock Spitfire wire cover.

Additionally, as explained by the gentleman who suggested this approach, if you are using a Spitfire column made for a steering lock / ignition switch assembly and installing it with the TR6 steering lock / ignition switch assembly, the holes for the steering column lock on the Spitfire column do not line up where they need to be on the TR6. This prevents the plunger on the TR6 steering lock / ignition switch assembly from engaging properly and locking the steering. His suggested approach was remove the plunger from the TR6 steering lock / ignition switch assembly and mount it further up on the steering column. The steering lock will not work, but the ignition switch assembly will be located closer to the driver, making it easier to reach.

**(3) Bending the Accelerator Pedal**

Finally, another TR6 owner has suggested bending the accelerator pedal down away from the driver and closer to the firewall, giving your right leg a bit more room. The metal of the accelerator shaft is soft enough to bend when securing the upper portion of the shaft where it enters into the foot well and then bending the foot pedal down.

The gentlemen who suggested this approach said he bent his pedal down to sit about an inch below the brake pedal when at rest.

The only other change you need to make with this approach is to adjust the pedal stop bolt. By bending the pedal you are decreasing the distance between the pedal and the stop bolt, which in turn decreases the amount the carburetor butterfly valves open when the pedal is pushed down all the way. Screw the pedal stop bolt in enough to allow the butterfly valves to open completely under full acceleration.

**CONCLUSION**

I hope this article proves useful to some of the taller TR6 aficionados out there or a taller person hesitant to buy one. If you know of any additional methods of creating more room in the TR6, especially those that don't require serious modification, I'd love to hear from you at jsvannorman@gmail.com.

---

*If you are the author of the website and it is still available, please contact me so that I can give you credit and include a link to the website.