

# Adding a direct line-in to your car stereo for an iPod/mp3 player

by [pickingrin](#) on June 30, 2008

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## Intro: Adding a direct line-in to your car stereo for an iPod/mp3 player

This instructable will show you how to add an auxiliary input, like a headphone jack, to your car so you can listen to an iPod/mp3 player/GPS or anything that has a line-out through your cars stereo.

While I will be adding it on my '99 Chevy Suburban, it can very easily be done on almost all cars, SUVs, and trucks.

Many of you will notice that I have a cassette player as well as a working radio in the car so an FM transmitter or cassette tape with a headphone jack might be the more logical answer. I have actually tried both, and while they both work OK the inconsistency and lower quality of the FM transmitter and the reliability and constant cleaning required of cassette player if you listen to your ipod more than a few times a month just don't cut it when you can have a high quality maintenance free direct line-in for a little bit more.

I found the auxiliary input I wanted at

[Peripheral Electronics](#)

then bought it off ebay.

The basic tools required are:

regular crescent wrench

Flat head screwdriver

Drill and bits (I used a 1/4" and a 5/8" bit)

You'll also need a stereo mini (1/8") jack-to-RCA cord about 3 to 6ft long (depending on whether the folks in the back seat want to play with the iPod/mp3 player while your listening). This cord will be what connects to your music player.



## step 1: Preparing the car

You will most likely have to remove the front cover of your dashboard to reach the back of the radio so its a good idea to remove one of you battery cables first so you don't accidentally set off the air bags or anything. There's very little chance of that happening, but if it did you would have much bigger problems than trying to connect your ipod to your car.

If you have two batteries like me (it's a diesel :-)) you should disconnect both of them. Later on I also had to move my shift lever since it's attached to the steering column so I set the emergency brake too.





## step 2: Removing the Dash

Okay, here's the fun part. This is usually very easy since most dashboards just snap right in. I would recommend looking up how to do it in your particular car just to be sure, but there really isn't much you can hurt. In my Suburban it just required gripping it hard on one end and slowly pulling it off. This is the only point I needed the screwdriver for, since I couldn't reach one of the clips with my fingers, and I just used my Leatherman.

As you pull the dash off be careful to not just rip it off as most of the cords to the buttons are clipped on the back. It's usually really easy to safely remove them since there's normally only one way to snap it back on. If you can't reach the clip with your fingers a flat head screwdriver does the trick nicely.

To fully remove the face of the dashboard I had to move the steering wheel and the shifter down to their lowest positions so make sure you have the parking brake set first.

As you can see there was one spot where I couldn't reach the clip so I used my Leatherman to unlatch it.











### step 3: Removing the Head Unit

For me this was as easy as pinching 2 clips on the sides together and pulling it out. Some head units will probably be a bit different from this especially if they're not stock, but from my experience it's usually pretty obvious. If not, then a quick search online will show how to do it on your particular car.

If your head unit was like mine then you'll want to unplug the smaller group of cords in the back. That's the one our little black box is going to split.



### step 4: Connecting the new inputs

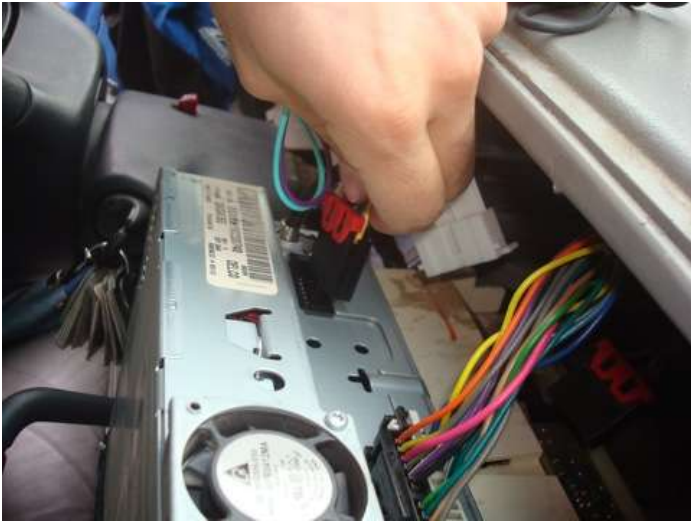
Alright, now that you've got the face of the dashboard off, and your head unit out it's time to plug your new toys in.

The black auxiliary input box has 2 connectors, one toggle switch, and 2 sets of RCA inputs coming off it. What we need to do is plug our RCA-to-mini cord into one set of those inputs, and hook up the connectors into the head unit. If your RCA cord doesn't say which one is left and right, the red end is always the right. Or if they're marked 'ring' and 'tip' then the ring is always the right.

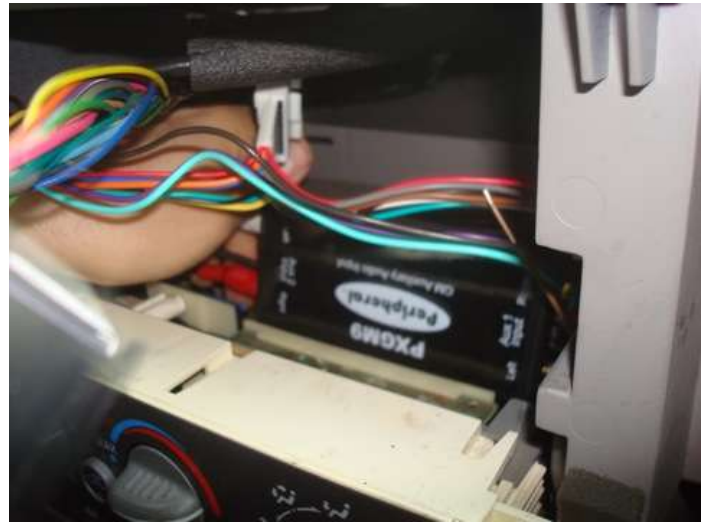
Simply unplug the matching cord from your head unit into the receiving end of the input box cord. For me that was unplugging the black connector from the head unit and plugging it into the white connector from our input box, and plugging the matching black connector from the input box into the head unit.

After you're all hooked up you'll find that you need a place in the immediate vicinity to store the input box. For me there was enough space behind the HVAC controls directly under the head unit that I could keep it there.

Now just put the head unit back in with your cord that's going to connect to your mp3 player out the side and move on to the next step!







### step 5: Finishing Up!

So all that's left to do is mount the toggle switch, make a hole for the cord, and put the face of the dashboard back on.

First lets start with the toggle switch. Like most of you I didn't tick every available option box on the SUV when I got it, so I have a handy blank space under my rear hatch button which I can mount the toggle switch to. I marked the center and used a 1/4" drill bit to make the hole. I don't recommend drilling while it's still attached, I was just trying to make it clearer. On the back of the blank square was some plastic molding for whatever button I didn't buy that was getting in the way so I just used pliers to snap them off.

After your spot is all prepared simply screw on the locking washer, washer, and nut tightly then move on to the remaining mini jack cord. Now just drill a hole wherever seems most convenient, (I had to use a 5/8" bit for this one) I did it on the far side of the CD player so it wouldn't dangle near the pedals, and pull the new cord through.

Note: If you tie a regular knot in the cord on the back side then if it gets accidentally yanked then it can't pull on anything else.

Now just put the dash back in the reverse order you took it off, remembering to re-clip all the buttons, reconnect the battery, turn on the car and release the high quality tunes!

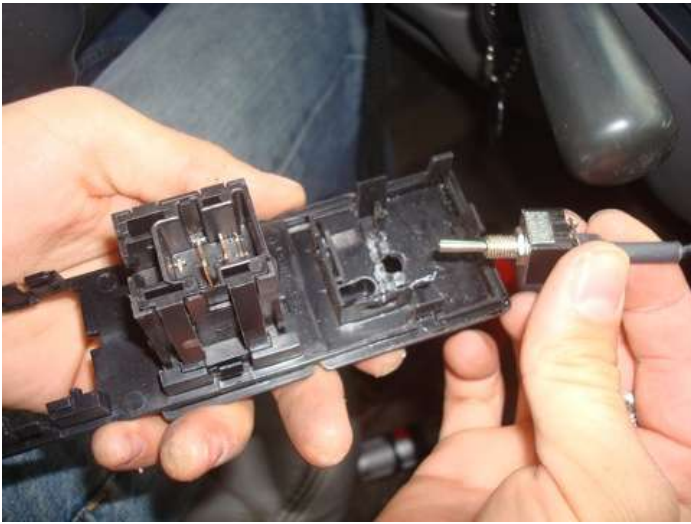
Note: My stereo had to be set on the CD player, and the toggle switch in the up position.

Your done! If you have any questions feel free to ask. Hope this helped you!

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## Related Instructables



**Add an Aux In jack for Clarion Stereo Head Unit (In Subaru)** by catnip67



**Add an auxiliary (MP3/iPod) input to your car's stock radio** by aka\_bigred



**MP3 player "input" for car stereo.** by mikeklepacz



**DIY iPod dock** by syzer



**My Car Stereo - iPod Enabled** by vinodvv



**How to build a very cheap car holder for an iPod Nano (3G)** by matd



**Loudest Boombox with MP3 Player HD Radio** by gordcn









**Add INTERNAL Bluetooth Capability To Your iPod 4G** by fstedie



# Comments

16 comments [Add Comment](#)

- 
-  **GerGa00** says: Sep 12, 2009. 7:59 PM [REPLY](#)  
So does the stereo need to have a cd player?  
Is there no way to do this mod without a cd player?
- 
-  **srhadaham** says: Jul 29, 2009. 11:59 PM [REPLY](#)  
your stereos is one heck of a lot harder to get to than mine, i only have to undo two screws and a faceplate pops off and then two bolts to free the stereo
- 
-  **pickingrin** says: Aug 4, 2009. 1:56 PM [REPLY](#)  
Which car is that?
- 
-  **srhadaham** says: Aug 4, 2009. 2:54 PM [REPLY](#)  
plymouth voyager, I'm not sure what year
- 
-  **srhadaham** says: Aug 4, 2009. 3:00 PM [REPLY](#)  
its a 1999 in case you care
- 
-  **Kontaminate** says: Jul 24, 2009. 8:55 AM [REPLY](#)  
How much did the "little black box" cost you on ebay?
- 
-  **pickingrin** says: Aug 4, 2009. 1:55 PM [REPLY](#)  
\$45
- 
-  **gman2000watts** says: Jul 17, 2009. 11:44 AM [REPLY](#)  
great instructable, but as all the installers have told me...DO NOT use metal for a panel popper! it will damage the interior.
- 
-  **pickingrin** says: Jul 18, 2009. 12:48 PM [REPLY](#)  
Great idea. For me there was only one spot under the dash that I couldn't grab with my hands. Another idea is to cover the screwdriver with a cloth.
- 
-  **ac1D** says: Jul 9, 2009. 2:33 PM [REPLY](#)  
I have one question:  
What is all these thing on your keyrings?lol!
- 
-  **hack124x768** says: Jul 10, 2009. 9:45 PM [REPLY](#)  
Looks like grocery store cards and such.
- 
-  **pickingrin** says: Jul 11, 2009. 6:38 AM [REPLY](#)  
Yeah, I travel a lot so I've got grocery cards for pretty much every store.
- 
-  **ac1D** says: Jul 11, 2009. 9:40 PM [REPLY](#)  
dunno where u live, buy here we don't have grocery card lol.
- 
-  **slimguy379** says: Jul 9, 2009. 8:03 PM [REPLY](#)  
my new deck came with an input, and i have an ash tray right below it and i ran the line through the ashtray and now i can play it like u awesome:). thanks for the tip.
-



**JanetWitch** says:  
BTW - GREAT photos!

Jul 8, 2009. 2:35 PM [REPLY](#)

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**JanetWitch** says:  
Awesome! I can't wait to put one in!

Jul 8, 2009. 2:34 PM [REPLY](#)

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