

I bought my first Boxster at the end of 2004, and it wasn't long before I had gotten the nerve to do some work on her myself. After plenty of research, I decided that my first project would be to swap out the stock shifter for a short-throw unit. The advantage of the short-throw shifter is that it reduces the distance your hand must move the shift lever between gears, theoretically reducing the time it takes to complete a shift. The exchange for the shorter throw is an increase in the effort needed to make the shift. Many (myself included) find the extra effort to also be a plus. For me, the shorter throw has a more mechanical feel to it, giving a better sense for when transmission is actually in gear, improving my clutch timing and making missed shifts less likely. I've enjoyed the short-throw shifter so much that it has seen duty in two different Boxsters and over 65,000 miles of enthusiastic use.

If you're interested in this modification, there are several short-throw shifters available for the 986, 996, 987, and the 997 (and every earlier model as well!) For starters, Porsche offers its own unit, which may have been an option on some years or models, such as the GT3. Through the dealership, the Porsche short-throw shifter is available as part of the Tequipment line, and it carries part number 997 424 983 00. One step outside of the factory offering is B&M's unit. Ever since the 1950's B&M has been making quality shifters for just about every automobile and transmission ever made, including Porsche. Unconfirmed rumor has it that the Porsche factory short-throw shifter is actually a rebranded, reprinted B&M shifter.

Whatever the truth may be, there are plenty of reviews of the B&M product, and I've never heard any reasonable complaints of failure or defects in their line. If you're interested in the B&M shifter, give Mark or Mackenzie a call at CDOC. I bet they've got 'em in stock. The shifter I've been using is made by another company, Schnell, and I've been very pleased with it. I chose the Schnell because it was a bit cheaper than the B&M unit, and that it also had plenty of positive reviews. At the very end of the "shifter food chain" are some bargain priced Chinese-made units available through various stores on e-Bay. The cost of these is about what you'd pay in sales tax on one of the factory shifters. I've seen a few reviews of these, and the statements have been relatively positive, but the shifters are still too recent on the market to determine durability. Caveat emptor...

Installation of the shifter is not a difficult job and can be completed in a couple of hours. Aside from a couple of Torx bits, there are no special tools required for the job. All of the shifter kits should come with instructions, but B&M has a wonderfully detailed PDF file of the entire process. You can view and download this at <http://www.bmracing.com/media/products/pdf/67.pdf>. I don't want to cover the entire installation process here, but I will add a couple of tips. You'll be removing the console, so be sure to get all of the torx screws holding it in. Two of them are hidden pretty well: One is under the coin holder in the rear storage compartment; another is at the very front under the "batwing" shaped panel. Second, for earlier cars (1997-2004), there were a couple of different shifter knobs available. The knobs that came with the standard interior did not have a screw securing the knob to the lever, while some of the knobs for optional interiors did. Raise the shift boot up to the base



of the knob, and if there is no obvious securing screw under the shift boot at the base of the knob, it is secured only by pressure. It takes a very strong pull to release it from the shift lever. Third, when you are removing the old shifter, you will need to cut the tabs from the original bushings holding the shifter in its housing. The B&M directions say to use a utility knife, but I found the plastic to be a bit tough for this. I used a sharp wood chisel and it made the job considerably easier and cleaner. Fourth, below the floor of the rear storage compartment is the mechanism for adjusting tension on the parking brake. If your cable has stretched and it's not holding as well as it did when the car was new, now is a great opportunity to make adjustments. It's a very straight forward procedure, tightening up the tensioning nut, and then securing it with the lock nut. And finally, for those who don't smoke or simply have no use for the ashtray, Porsche has a nifty "Non-Smoker's Shelf" (option M580) that replaces the ashtray in the console, giving you a perfect place to keep your cell phone, change, chap stick, or any other small bits. The ashtray has to come out to get to some of the console bolts, so you've got a fine opportunity to abandon it altogether and pick up a clean little bit of storage space. Have a look at Suncoast Parts and Accessories or any dealership for the non-smoker's shelf. Have fun making your car "One in a series of one", just like the recent PCNA advertisement.

Happy driving and wrenching!



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