

C4 Outer Taillight Replacement – With the 98 C4 Avant as the Guinea Pig/Example

D. Forgie, March 2013

I had to replace the right outer rear taillight on my 98 C4 Avant so I thought I might as well document it. It isn't a difficult job (tell that to my cut up left hand – the body has sharp bits) but this DIY will make it even easier (I hope).

The Problem (either I bumped into something or somebody/thing bumped into the avant. Broken and cracked right outer taillight. Had to go. Taped it up to keep the rain out until I got a new (good used) taillight)



The rear outer taillights are different for the C4 sedans and the C4 avants due to slight curvature differences. Avant outers have “AVANT” branded into the plastic (a photo of this shows up later in this DIY).

Part Numbers for North American outer taillights (look red, blink red):

Sedan: Left outer = 4A5945217A, Right outer = 4A5945218A

Avant: Left outer = 4A9945217A, Right outer = 4A9945218A

Tools required:

8 mm socket, 10 mm socket, extensions, ratchets, swivels and possibly 8 mm wrench if you don't have a swivel.

Accessing the taillight

Access to the outer taillights for the sedans is gained by pulling back the grey side trunk lining. Access for the avants is through the side “storage” cubby covers. The left one of these on a North America car is almost empty, even if you have the CD changer. That said, the 10 disc Sony/Blaupunkt changer might have to be removed. The smaller 6 disc Alpine changer is probably okay as it is. However, the right side is another matter, at least on the BOSE-equipped cars:

The right rear cubby cover:



Removing the cubby cover exposes your first “challenge” (not really), the BOSE Sub and the rear washer fluid storage bottle/tank (and pump):



While it might be possible to remove and replace the outer right taillight with the BOSE sub and washer bottle in place, they are very easy to remove and the extra room makes it easier to see what you are doing later. To remove the BOSE sub, you first remove the 10 mm nuts shown in the photo above. Even after pivoting the washer bottle filler neck out of the way, I could not get the sub out with the bracket attached to the car. As a result, I suggest removing the bracket (one 10 mm nut and one 8 mm nut (no idea why the different sizes):



Once the bracket is either out or at least loose, you will be able pull the BOSE Sub out further. However, before you remove the entire sub, you will have to disconnect the red and white connectors that are hiding in their little grey foam sleeves:

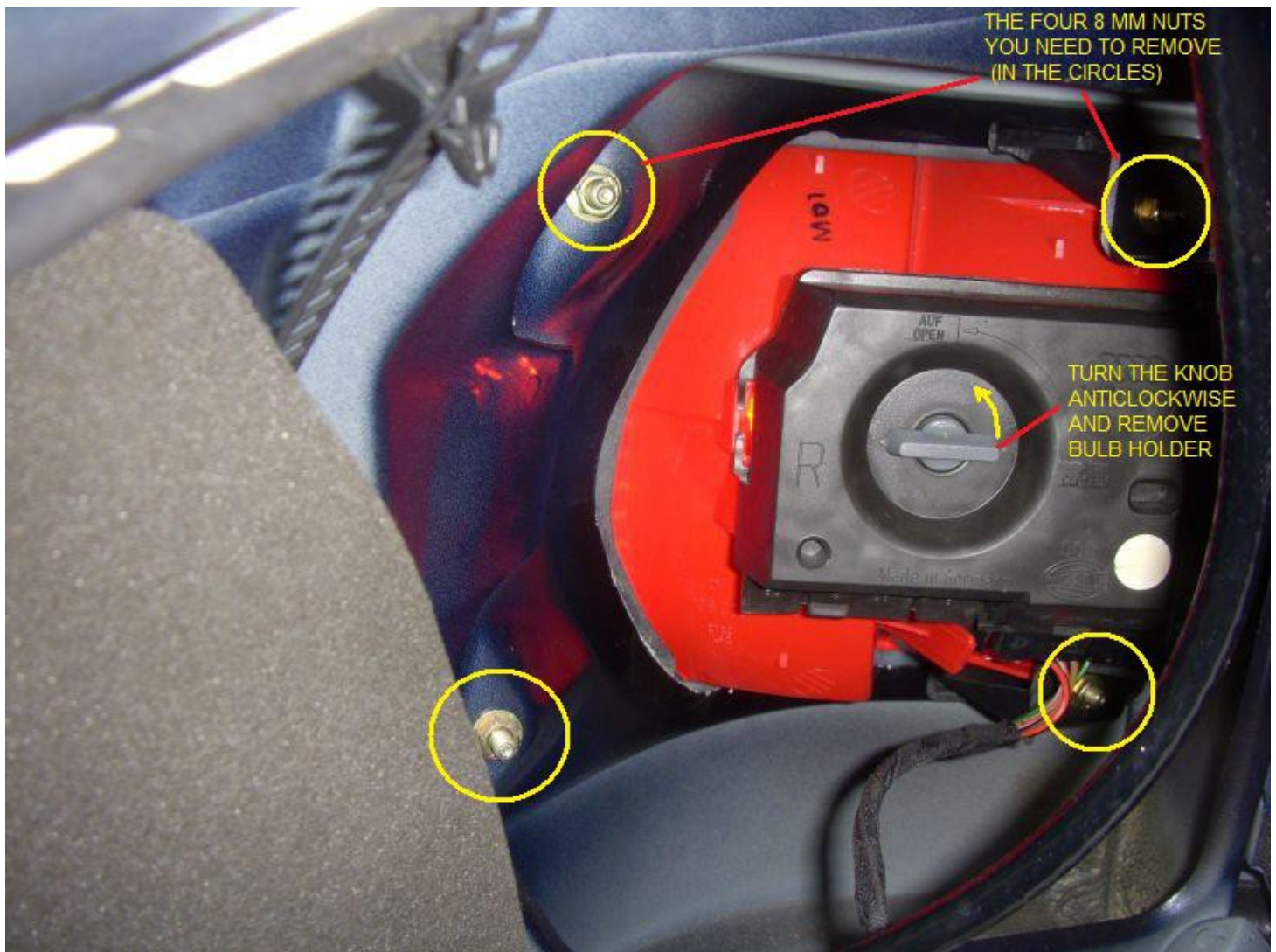


With the electrical connections to the BOSE sub disconnected, pull/wiggle the the sub itself out. IF the loosened bracket is still causing you grief, unclip the wiring harness from the bracket (be gentle with the wire clips, you can re-use them if you don't damage them – wiggle one side of the “^” out and then the other).

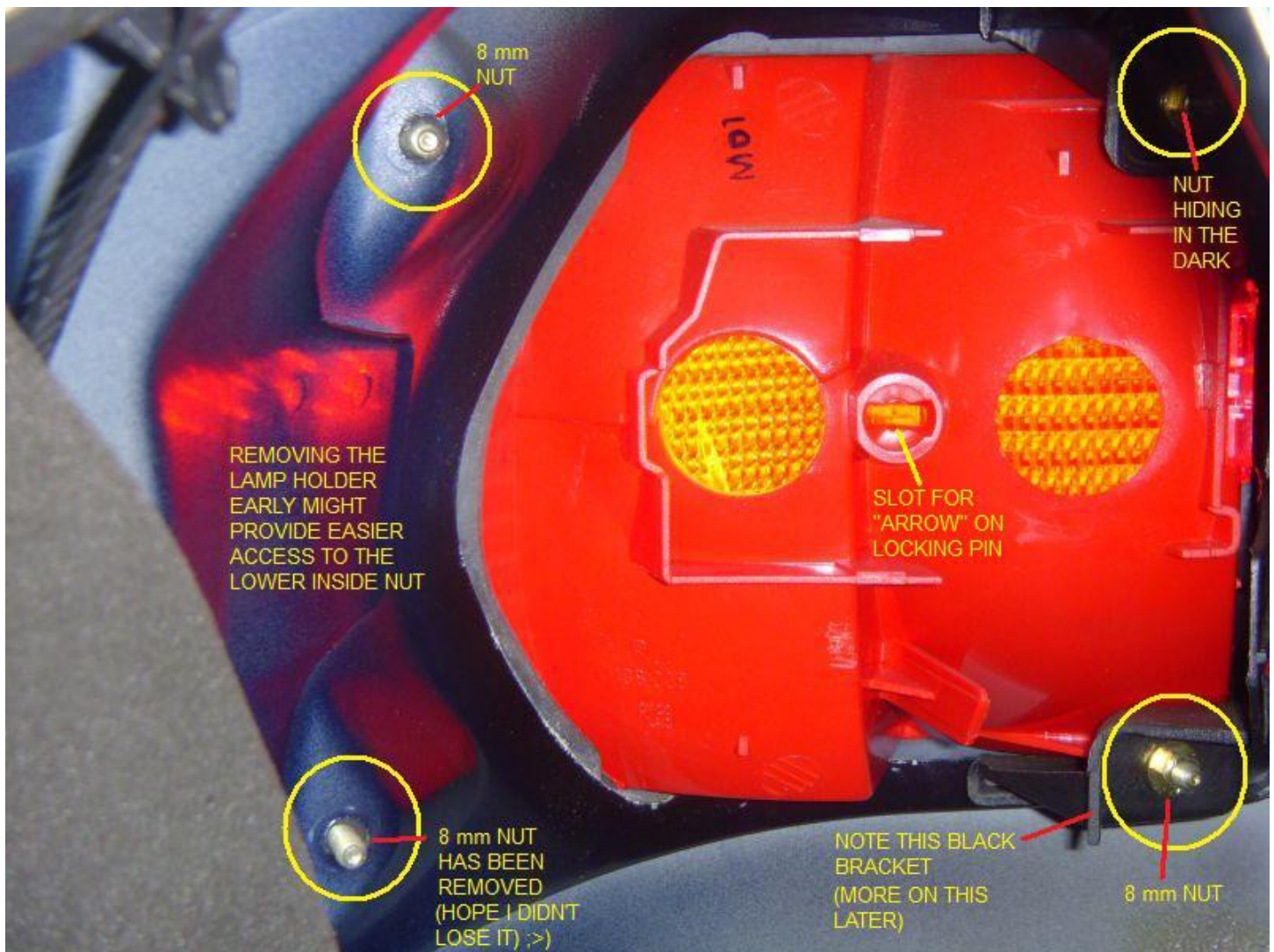
Once the sub is out, lay down in a safe place. Now pull the rear window washer fluid reservoir straight up. Disconnect the two pin connector on top of the pump and swing the reservoir (still attached to the discharge hose out of the cubby cavity and lay it down in the cargo area).

Now that that is all done, you can see the four 8 mm nuts that you have to remove (see photo below). The two outer nuts are a piece of cake. The inner nuts are more of an issue and will require your ingenuity and patience. I didn't have a swivel for my 3/8 drive and extension so I ended up using an 8 mm box end, working blind to loosen in the nuts and then my fingers to spin them off (try not to drop them regardless). I think a 9 inch extension and a swivel for a 3/8 drive 8 mm socket would work or an 8 mm 1/4" drive and a 1/4" ratchet would work okay too (but you would be working blind).

Once you have all four nuts off, place them in a safe place. Now turn the latch knob on the bulb holder 90 deg anticlockwise and pull the bulb holder off the taillight. Lay the bulb holder down in the cubby cavity gently.

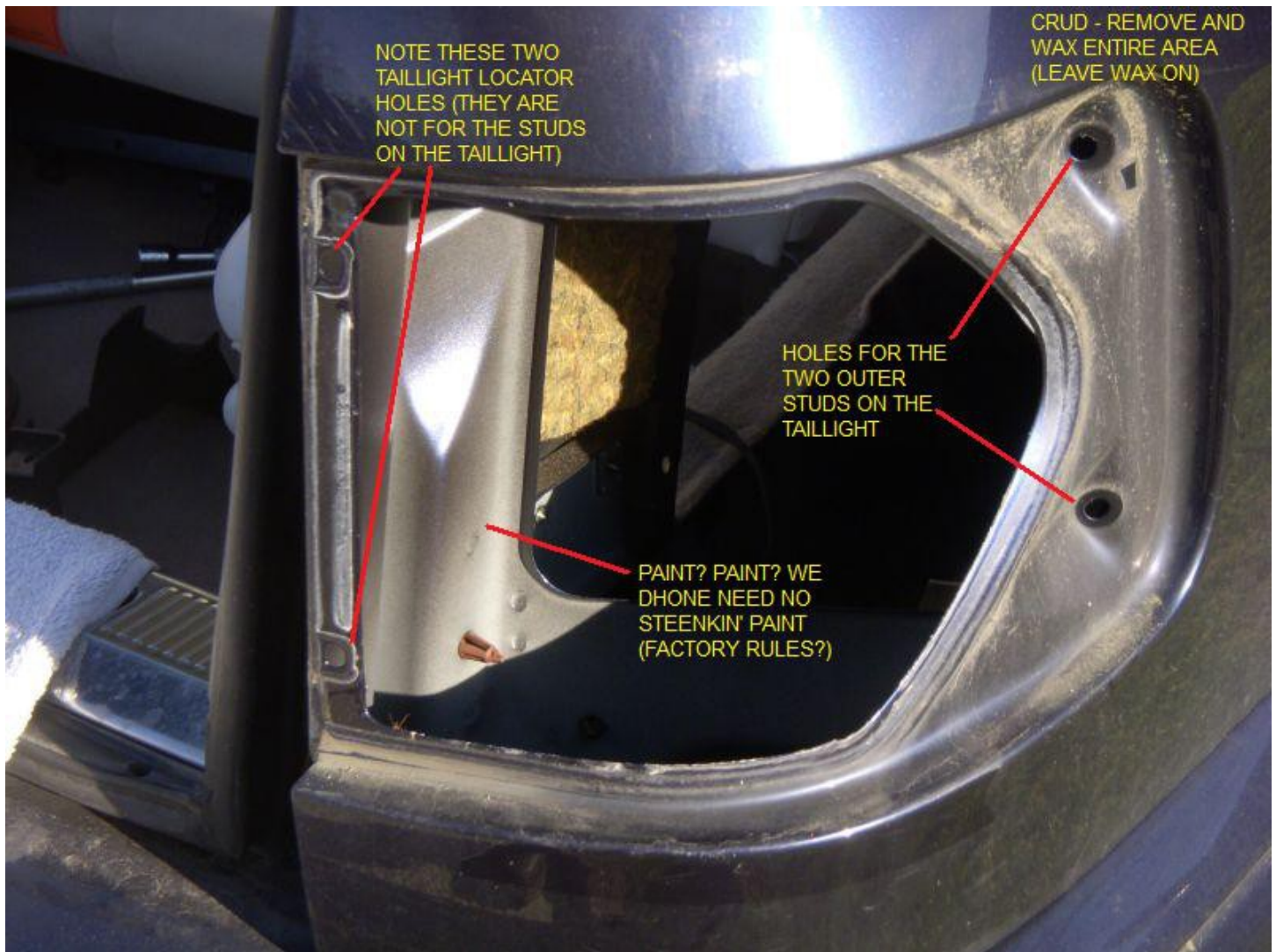


Note: That if you want, you can remove the lamp holder earlier than waiting for all four nuts to be off. Removing the lamp holder might make it easier to access the lower inner nut. Note the black bracket in the lower right corner of this photo:



Either way, once you have the four nuts off and the lamp holder removed from the taillight, you can remove the taillight from the body. For me, I stood beside the bumper and leaned in to the cargo area (the trunk would be the same). With one hand (left in my case for the right taillight), I pushed the taillight outwards (it is just held on by the stickiness of the foam rubber gasket) while I used my other hand to catch the taillight when it popped out. I then placed the taillight in a safe place (I might come in handy for something in the future, at least as a dust catcher, can't have too many of those).

You now should be looking at a cavity something like this:



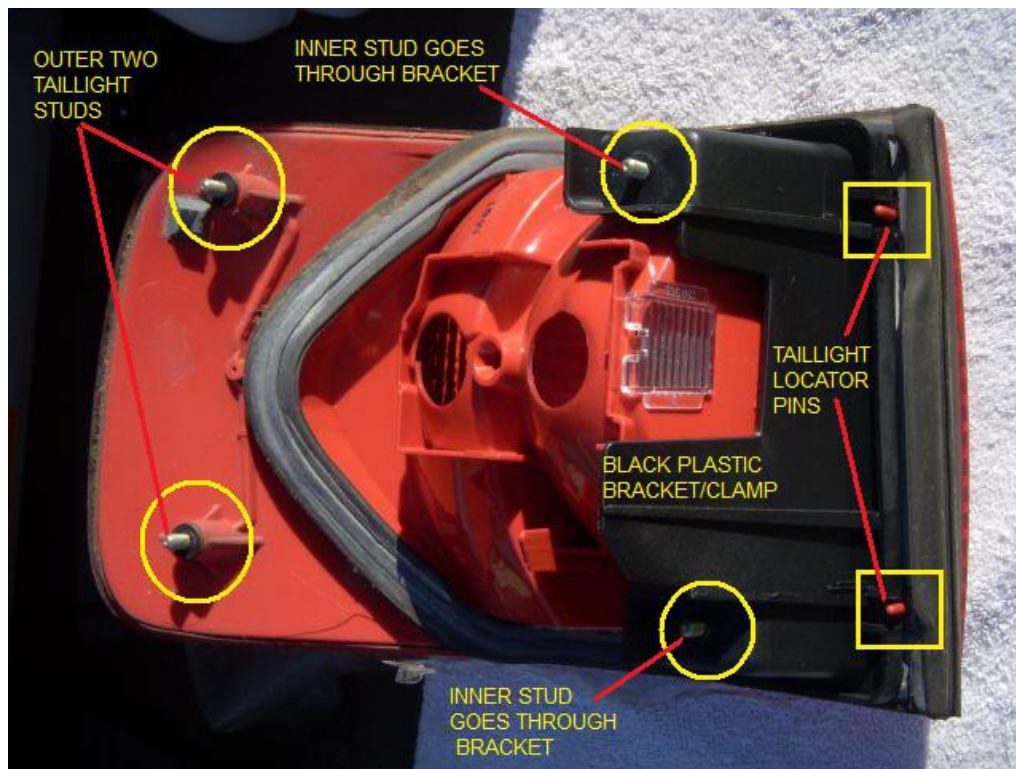
Note the two locator tabs and holes on the inner side (these will be important in a minute). The outer two holes are much larger and are for the outer two studs on the taillight.

Note the economy of the paint use. No paint on areas that are never seen, just the multilayer primer, etc.

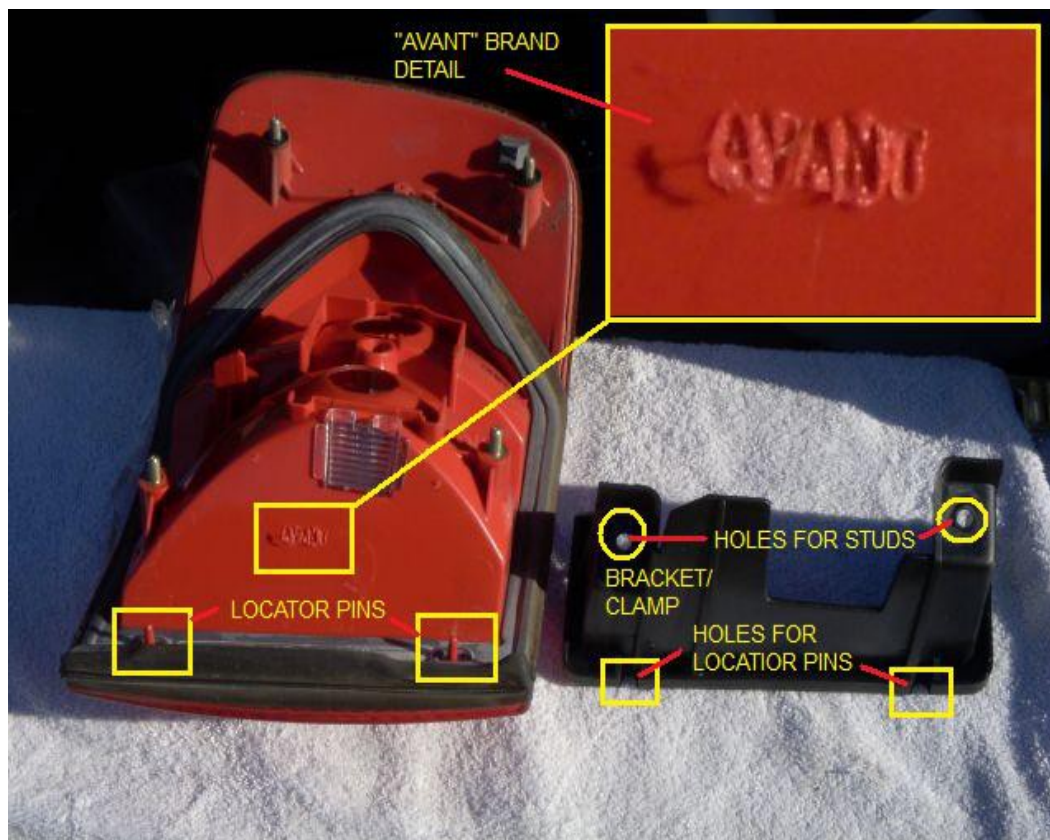
This car sits out all year. It was a bit cruddy as you can see. I cleaned that up with Windex and a paper towel and then waxed the entire area, leaving the wax on (not wax on/wax off).

I cleaned the area where the taillight gasket sits but I did not use any caulking or sealant on the installation of the new taillight. I assumed that since the factory didn't use any sealant, I was good. (Time will tell) ;>

Okay now we get to see what was up with that black bracket over the inner two taillight studs. It's more of a clamp than a bracket. The bracket is on the inside of the body while the taillight is on the outside, so the body gets sandwiched between the bracket and the inner part of the taillight.



This view shows the bracket/clamp separate from the taillight. Note the "AVANT" branded into the taillight:



Installation of the new (or good used) taillight is the reverse of removal BUT there are a few more hints:

1. Place the new taillight into the cavity without the black bracket/clamp. Make sure that the two red inner locator pins go through their respective holes at the same time as the two outer taillight studs go through the two holes in the body.
2. While holding the taillight in place with one hand, lean into the car and reach in to the cavity and put the 8 mm nuts on the two outer studs (turn by hand only). Don't tighten.
3. With the two nuts on the outer studs and perhaps with the aid of a flashlight, reach in from the inside and place the black bracket/clamp over the two inner most taillight studs. (It only goes on one way, you'll figure it out).
4. With the black bracket sitting over the two inner taillight studs, start the two 8 mm nuts on the inner studs. Go hand tight while pushing the taillight into the body from the outside (and thus compressing the foam rubber gasket).
5. Pushing again from the outside, hand-tighten (again) the nuts on the two outermost studs.
6. Repeat Inner/Outer until you really can't tighten them by hand anymore.
7. Now get out your 8 mm socket/wrench and tighten the nuts until they are "goodandtight". Don't bust a gut or pull a stud out of the taillight.
8. Continue with the replacement of everything else you took off. Start with the bulb holder. It has an "arrowhead" on the locking pin. Line that up with the slot in the taillight. Turn the knob 90 degrees to the right to lock the bulb holder into the taillight.
9. Re-connect the rear washer pump two pin electrical connector. Watch the discharge hose (it fits into a groove in the back of the washer fluid tank).
10. The rear washer fluid tank has a "V"-shaped bump that fits into a "V"-shaped bracket on the body. Don't quit until you get it right. Swing the fluid filling tube OUT before you install the BOSE sub.
11. I put the BOSE sub bracket over its body studs loosely before I put the sub into the cavity, once I had the sub in, I put the 8 mm and 10 mm nuts and washers on those studs and then put the sub on the bracket and added the 10 mm nuts and washers. Reconnect the white and red connectors and pull the foam sleeves over the connectors. Tuck them back into the cavity.
12. Probably time to check the taillights and signal lights (should be good).
13. Put the cubby hatch cover back on, clean up and crack open a beer.

I am sure that this DIY wasn't really necessary but hey, you never know, it could help you with your first taillight R&R.

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March 25, 2013.