

# MiTo Heater Bulb Replacement

Unless your MiTo has the dual zone climate control, you'll have the heater with the three dial controls for temperature, fan speed and vent direction. The unit itself is pretty robust, only really failing when the heater resistor has blown (see our Useful Info section of [mitoregister.com](http://mitoregister.com) for a guide to fix this). But the unit does have one Achilles heel: the bulbs behind it which tend to blow every three or four years. If your bulbs go you will see it (or not) at night by the lack of illumination of your heater. It's not a huge issue but in winter it can be a real pain fumbling at your dials. And as most of us don't have a new MiTo, chances are yours may be nearing the age when you'll be faced with a dark heater unit just when you don't need it.

The process of replacing the bulbs is relatively straightforward, but it certainly ranks as one of the most fiddly of jobs on the MiTo. With my sausage fingers, the total job took around 1.5hrs, much of which was cursing the Italians for making such simple and cheap things so hard to get to.

So let's start with what you'll need. It's a relatively small list. You'll need some ISO radio removal keys (available from Halfords and most motorist shops), a T25 Torx head which can fit in both a screwdriver and a socket, a flat-head screwdriver, some long nose pliers (if you have big hands) and two replacement bulbs. Oh, and ideally enormous patience and tiny hands. Though I have neither so it is achievable without those.

The bulbs are readily available when you know what to get. They are 12v 1.2w "286" bulbs. Often referred to as capless or wedge bulbs, sometimes called dashboard bulbs, but always the number 286. Whether Lucas, Osram or Bosch, they will all be 286.

However, if you search your favourite auction sites you will find countless versions of unbranded 286 bulbs which I would strongly advise avoiding. I simply walked into my local branch of Motabitz and they had plenty of Osram 286 packs for £4.99 a pair. Halfords has got them (use your AROC discount) or you can get from virtually anywhere. And at this price, and with this amount of fiddling to replace them, it's really not worth going unbranded or cheap only to find they've blown again in a few months.

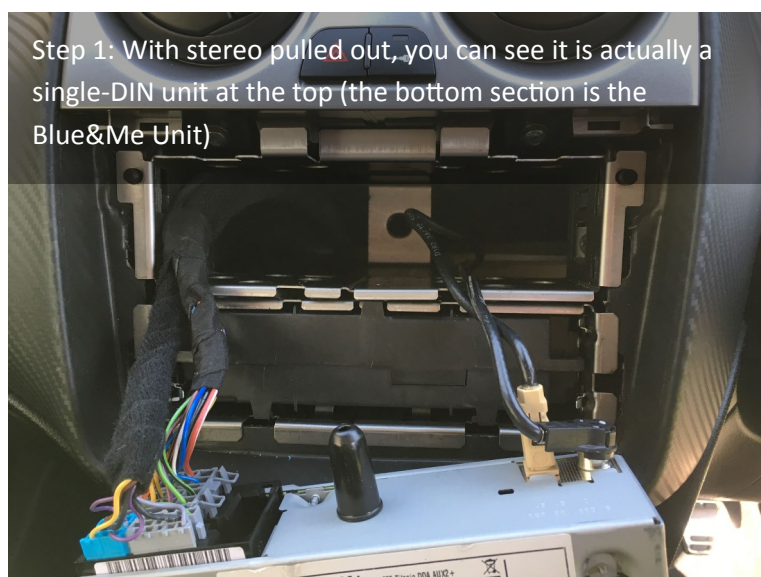
## Step 1: (Almost) Remove stereo

If you've had your stereo out before, you will know it's not very difficult. But if you haven't, it can be quite tricky the first time as it's pretty wedged in there. The standard ISO release keys are not quite the right measurement for the MiTo standard head unit, so you will need to pull them apart a little. But try to pull them apart by holding the base of the V shape, then bend in the pins until they fit the holes in the stereo. Once the keys are in, you should be able to pull on them to release the stereo, but if it seems jammed there are two things that can help: firstly, try squeezing the keys in towards each other and pulling then push them out away from each other and pull (and you can try a little up and down motion too). If it still isn't budging, there is a technique that could help. Open and empty your glovebox and, sitting in the passenger seat, put your left elbow in the glovebox and your left hand up behind the stereo. Apply some pushing to the back of the top of the stereo whilst pulling a bit on the ISO keys with your right hand. Your stereo may have been in place for years, so a little patience may be needed (or it might pop right out).

With the stereo out, you can see that it's actually just a single-DIN unit with a big face, and the



Step 1: ISO keys to (almost) remove the stereo



Step 1: With stereo pulled out, you can see it is actually a single-DIN unit at the top (the bottom section is the Blue&Me Unit)

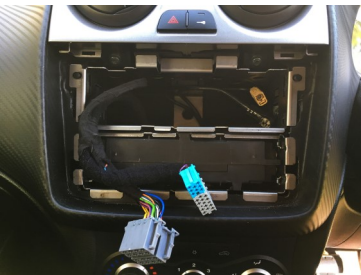


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lower section behind the stereo is actually your Blue&Me unit.

## Step 2: Disconnect stereo and remove completely

There are four connections on the back of the standard stereo, two of which are box connectors. Unclip all four and gently remove the stereo entirely.



identified in the image with red circles: two on each side and one at the rear of the top. You need to (carefully) undo and remove these screws, taking care not to allow them to drop behind the back of the dashboard! Don't panic if this happens as chances are you can find them later after a few more steps, but best to avoid the trauma if you can.



## Step 3: (Almost) Remove Blue&Me unit

The Blue&Me unit can also be released with the ISO keys. Simply push them in the sides of the Blue&Me unit as per the image and gently withdraw the unit. Do not pull it out quickly as it has a cable connection on the top.

## Step 4: Disconnect Blue&Me unit and remove completely

The Blue&Me unit has a single blue locking connector on the top. Simply pull the black plastic lever on the top and the blue connector can be unplugged, allowing you to completely remove the Blue&Me unit.



## Step 5: Unscrew and remove stereo cage

There are five T25 Torx screws holding in the metal caging that surrounds the stereo and the Blue&Me unit,

Once the five screws are out, the upper and lower caging simply pulls out, but take care to feed the wires and connectors for the stereo and the Blue&Me unit through the caging so they remain behind the dashboard.

## Step 6: Undo the bottom heater screws

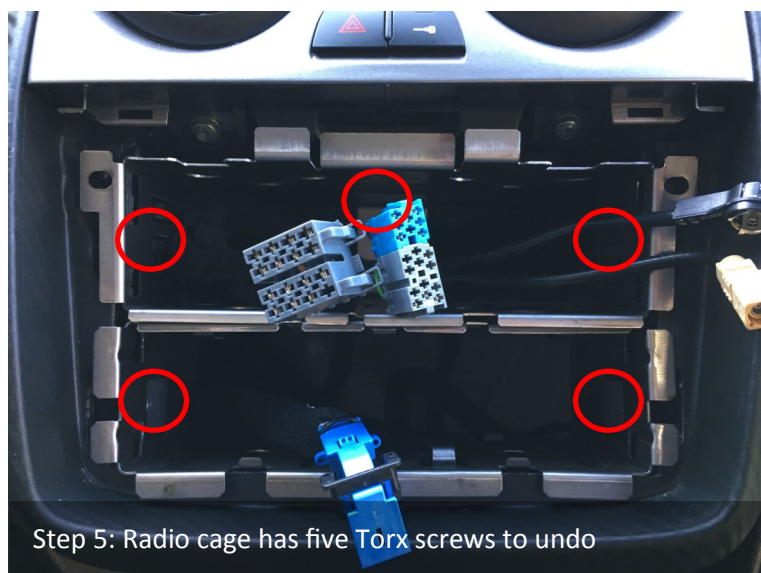
At the bottom of your dashboard, above the cup-holder and your DNA switch (if you have one), is a tiny detachable piece of trim. This pops off with equal amounts of fiddling and pulling, revealing the Torx screws (2 facing upwards) which hold the bottom of the heater unit. You will also see two horizontal screws which you don't need to touch.



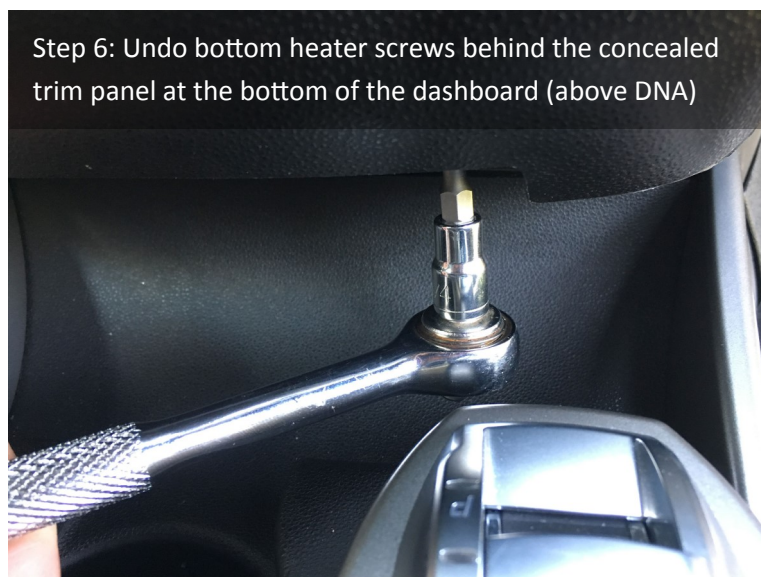
This is the stage why you need a separate T25 Torx head, rather than a long Torx screwdriver. To undo the upwards screws in that tight space below the dashboard, the only way seemed to be to put



Step 3: ISO keys also used to remove Blue&Me unit



Step 5: Radio cage has five Torx screws to undo



Step 6: Undo bottom heater screws behind the concealed trim panel at the bottom of the dashboard (above DNA)

the Torx head into a small socket driver to use upside down. There just didn't seem the space to get any other form of driver under

there. In any event, after some fiddling (it helped a lot to use my phone camera as a kind of mirror to see what I was doing) you can



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eventually undo the screws.

## Step 7: Undo the top heater screws

Back up in the big hole you've created where your stereo used to be, you will see the two Torx screws that secure the top of the heater (shown in the picture with red circles). Undo and remove both of these, again being careful not to lose them behind the dashboard.

Finally, with a flat head screwdriver, prise off the plastic clip in the centre of the heater top and the heater will come free from the dashboard and can be manoeuvred by hand.



## Step 8: Manoeuvre the heater facing down

To get access to the bulbs, the easiest way is to gently manoeuvre the heater unit to be facing down, that way you can use the hole where the stereo was to gain access with your hands. This takes a little while and be careful not to manhandle the unit too aggressively as you don't want to scratch the front of the heater.



## Step 9: Remove the two bulb holders, one at a time!

As you can see from the pictures, the bulbs are contained in two tiny grey bulb holders, each having purple and orange/

red wires. The grey holders are seated into the plastic of the heater unit, but can be pulled out with gentle persuasion. I resorted to using nose-pliers but you may be able to do it with your fingers if they aren't big sausages like mine. But be careful: do not be tempted to just pull the wires – this could end in bigger problems than a blown bulb!

In truth, I doubt if it matters if the bulb holders go back in the wrong spot, but I would do one at a time to ensure they do.

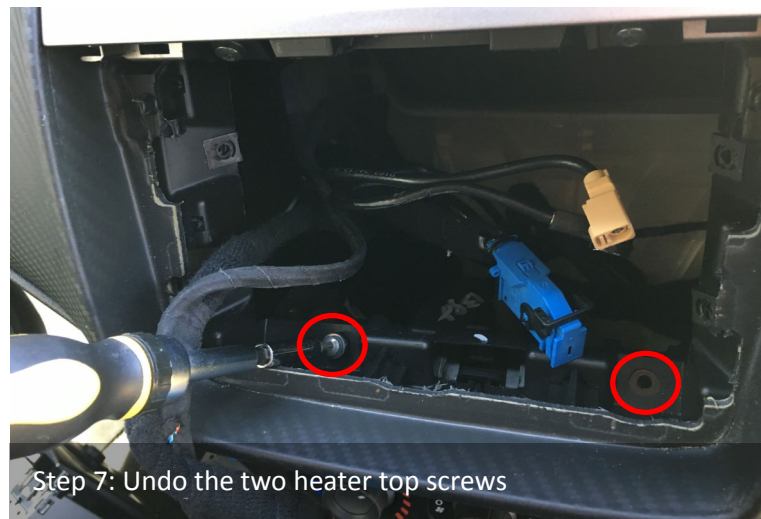
As you can see, the 286 bulbs really are miniature, but they simply pull out gently with your fingers and are replaced with the new bulbs the same way. Ensure you do not mix up bulbs at this stage! Put the new ones in and clip the grey bulb-holder back into the recess. As a note, one of mine seemed pretty loose. I'm sure I did not cause any damage, but I did put a little electrical tape over it just to ensure it was held in tightly. I expect this was just a feature of my car!

And there you are, you have replaced your heater bulbs! But your MiTo looks a right mess...

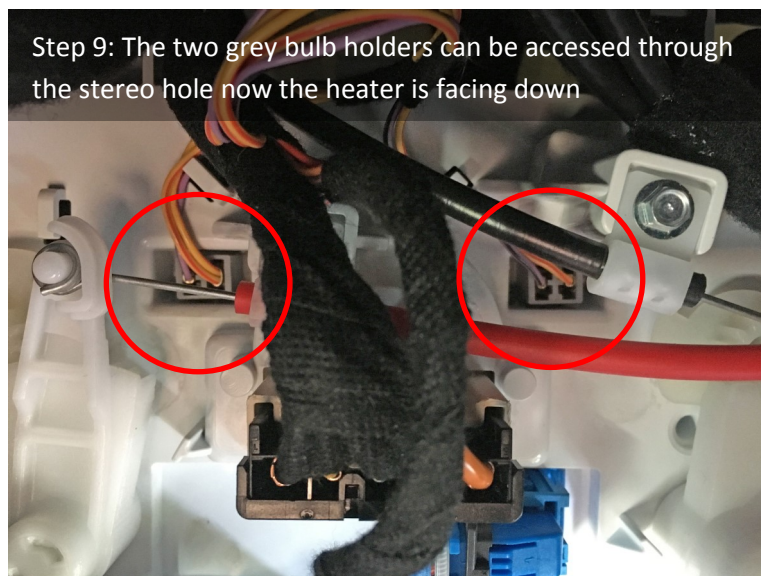
So now you need to reverse everything you did, but you'll be pleased to know it all goes back in much easier and in only a few minutes. Start by manoeuvring the heater back in place by hand but before going on, just put your ignition on and your lights on and check the heater bulbs light up the unit! I'm sure all will be fine, but better to check now before everything is back in place!

If it lights up, switch your lights off and turn your ignition off then start the re-assembly by clipping in the top clip of the heater and putting the two top screws back in. Then screw in the two bottom screws (quite fiddly) and replace the trim panel.

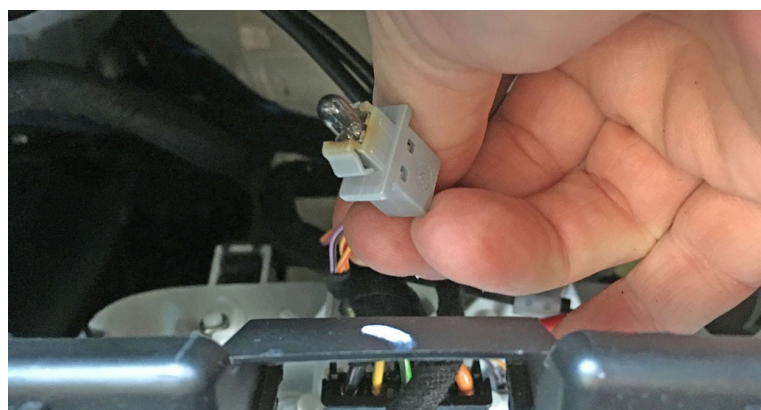
Replace the stereo cage taking care to feed the four stereo cables through the top and the Blue&Me cable through the



Step 7: Undo the two heater top screws



Step 9: The two grey bulb holders can be accessed through the stereo hole now the heater is facing down



bottom cage. Then carefully screw in the five cage screws (two on each side, one at the top/rear).

Re-connect the Blue&Me unit and slide it in until it clicks. Then re-connect all four stereo cables (it's obvious which ones go where) then again slide the stereo into place until that clicks too (you don't need the ISO keys to put anything back in).

I've owned a lot of Alfa Romeos and several of them are renowned for having difficult to replace sidelight or indicator bulbs. But the MiTo, despite my love of it, has without doubt the most annoying little heater bulbs. But if you're up for a couple of hours sat in your MiTo (who isn't?) then it's a relatively simple, albeit crazy, process.