

**2001 – 2004 Acura MDX  
2<sup>nd</sup> Row Seat – Fold-Down Lever Repair**

**Estimated Time:** 1-2 hours  
**Estimated Effort:** Easy to Moderate  
**Estimated Cost:** \$0.00 (That's right - Free)

**General Problem**

You lift the lever on your 60-40 middle seat to fold it down, but the seat won't fold down. This problem can occur on either the driver's side or the passenger side middle seat.

The general problem is that the lever is not pulling up a cable that runs through the seat and is attached to the fold-down latch at the bottom of the seat.

**Most Likely Specific Problem**

The most likely specific problem is that the lever (first picture) is broken where the cable attaches to it (pictures 2 & 3). If this is your situation, you are in luck. These instructions will fix your problem with modest effort and probably no cost.

If your problem is something else, like a broken cable, then refer to this link (<http://mdxers.org/forums/attachment.php?postid=401350>) which will guide you through taking the seat apart to remove and replace the whole lever / cable mechanism.



## Warning – Caveat

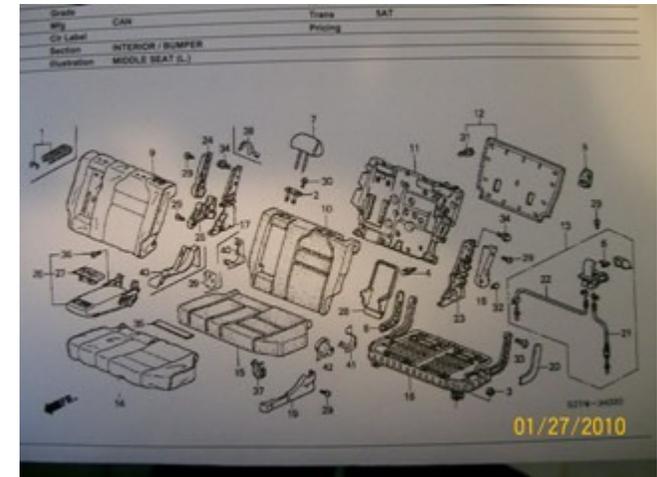
This repair involves some risk of further breaking the lever mechanism / cover plate which may require you to buy a new mechanism from the dealer. This is because some of the steps involve forcing off /on plastic parts that were not necessarily intended to come off /on in this order. This is unavoidable without taking the whole seat apart as described in the aforementioned link. Nevertheless in my opinion, the risk is less than taking the whole seat apart and not being able to get it back together again. In any case, even if you further break the lever mechanism, you're no worse off than before you started because the dealer has to sell you a whole mechanism anyway – So go for it.

## Quick Background on Lever Mechanism

Look at the adjacent diagram which shows the driver's side rear seat (**there is a larger version of this diagram at the bottom of this document**). Notice the lever and cable mechanism on the right side of the diagram. The lever mechanism includes parts numbered 6-Screw Hole Cover; 21-Left Side Cable; 22-Right Side Cable, and 13 which is the whole shebang. If you go to the dealer, **they cannot sell you just the lever**. They can sell either the individual cables for between \$70-90 each or the whole mechanism for about \$125. The passenger side seat is the same except it has only one cable and the mechanism is a little less, but still expensive.

## Dealer Repair Quote - \$415.00

The dealer confirmed that the lever on my driver's side was broken and the repair required the removal and replacement of the whole mechanism. I am sure the passenger side would be less, but still at least \$200.



## Summary of Repair

**First, the lever itself is the exact same part on both the driver's and passenger side. They are interchangeable.** Adjacent is a picture of a broken lever. Notice that there are holes for attaching a cable on both the right and left side. The passenger side has only one cable, so only one side of the lever is needed. The driver's side has two cables so both sides are needed.

**Passenger Side Repair:** If the passenger side lever is broken, the repair is to simply attach the cable to the side of the lever that isn't broken.

**Driver's Side Repair:** If the driver's side lever is broken, the repair is to exchange the driver's side and passenger side levers. Since the passenger side isn't broken, it has two good cable holders that the driver's side can use. Since the passenger side only has one cable, it can use the unbroken holder from the driver's side lever.



## Tools

Here is a picture of the tools I used. Your experience may vary.

Flashlight  
Flat head screwdriver  
Phillips head screwdriver  
Needle nose pliers  
Pliers



## Good Ideas:

- A. Do this repair in the daytime. You will be all over and in the back of the MDX and you need as much light as possible.
- B. Get a cardboard box or something you can place on the middle seat that will allow you to prop the folding back of the seat it at a 45 degree angle. This will allow you to stand outside the car and work on the seat back comfortably. Some repairs I saw online said to take the seats out. I highly discourage this as it would be more work than the repair itself and I think it would be difficult to keep the seats from moving at various times in this repair.
- C. Be patient – don't rush. This repair involves plastic, upholstery and screw drivers. The repair is perfectly safe and will not harm you or your car as long as you don't get frustrated and break or poke something you shouldn't.

## Preliminary Task – Determine that you have a Broken Lever

Remove the cover under the lever that isn't working. **Follow Task 1 – Step 1 or Task 2 – Step 1 as applicable.** Look at the lever. Refer to the pictures above. Do you see a broken piece of plastic where the cable hooks on to the lever? If yes, proceed with this repair. If not, refer to the link above

## Repair Details

### Task 1 – Remove Passenger Side Lever Mechanism

#### Step 1 – Remove Cover from Under the Lever

**This is the riskiest step in the process.** Look carefully at the adjacent picture and the bottom of this document before proceeding. The cover is snapped onto the lever and slides in the grooves of the lever well.

Lift the lever as high as it will go obviously w/o breaking it. If your passenger side lever is broken, then you will have to do this step from the back of the MDX. If the passenger seat folds down, prop the seat at a 45 degree angle and do this from outside the car.

Put your flat head screwdriver into one of the slits in the cover and pry the cover up. You are trying to unsnap the top of the cover from the lever so you are kind of pushing in as you are levering it up. Once you hear it unsnap, use your hand to squeeze the bottom of the cover inwards while lifting and wiggling and jiggling the cover up and off the lever.

**Don't get frustrated. It could take 10 seconds - it could take 10 minutes.** Just be careful to not be too abusive and break off the inside moldings (see bottom of document for pictures) that clip the cover onto the lever.



**See enlarged pictures of cover at bottom of document**

#### Step 2 – Remove Screws from Lever Mechanism

Remove the screw hole cover to expose the screws. Use your flat head screwdriver or a butter knife or pocket knife. This is not difficult, but it is easy to scratch up the plastic around the cover so be a little careful. Use the Phillips head screwdriver to take out the screws.



<----- This picture is not entirely accurate because it shows the lever cover still on. If you followed the instructions above, the cover should already be off.



### Step 3 – Unhook the Cable from the Lever

If your passenger side lever is broken, this step is already done for you. Move on to next step.

After you take out the screws, you will notice that the lever mechanism is loose, but will not come off the seat. This is because the cable and cable grommet is hooked to the lever. Fold the seat forward 45 degrees or more – this will put slack in the cable. Use your fingers or screwdriver to unhook cable from lever. It should come off very easily. If not, you probably don't have enough slack in the cable. Fold the seat further down to create more slack.



#### Step 4 – Slide Cable Grommet Off of Lever Mechanism

**This is the second hardest step so be careful and be patient.** Make sure the seat is folded forward at least 45 degrees because you need slack in the cable to perform this step. If your passenger side seat is the broken one, use a pair of pliers to grab and pull the end of the cable (as if the pliers were the lever) to unlatch the seat. Then fold the seat forward.

Place a flat head screwdriver on the side of the grommet and force the grommet towards the middle of the well where it will slip through the larger hole in the well. **Note the word force. It will take significant force to move the grommet over.** I think this is difficult because they probably expect you to do this step with the seat and cable mechanism disassembled and you would slide the grommet from underneath the well.

**Be careful that you don't put the screwdriver behind the part of the lever that holds the cable.** If you are not careful you could easily break off this part and that would be the end of the lever- unless that happened to be the broken side anyway.



#### Step 5 – Remove the Lever Mechanism

Push the cable grommet and the end of the cable through the large hole in the bottom of the well. The lever mechanism should now come right out leaving you with a scary hole in the middle of your seat with a cable sticking out of it.



**Note – If it is your passenger side lever that is broken, skip Task 2 and proceed to Task 3 – Replace Passenger Side Lever Mechanism.**

## **Task 2 – Remove Driver’s Side Lever Mechanism**

**For the most part, these are the exact same instructions as removing the passenger side. The only differences are that there is a headrest in the way and there are two cables on the driver’s side, otherwise, the instructions are identical.**

### **Preliminary Step – Remove Driver’s Side Headrest**

The middle seat headrest gets in the way on the driver’s side so you want to take it off. Press the button shown in the picture and lift up on the headrest. It will come completely out.

### **Step 1 – Remove Cover from Under the Lever**

Because the driver’s side lever has two cables, the lever will be broken on one side but not the other. Therefore, the seat will be latched and you will have to do this from the back of the SUV. The rest of the instructions are the same as removing the passenger side cover.

### **Step 2 – Remove Screws from Lever Mechanism**

See passenger side instructions.

### **Step 3 – Unhook the Cable from the Lever**

At this point you should see one cable attached to the non-broken side of the lever and an unattached cable on the side that is broken. Lift the lever while using the pliers to pull up the unattached cable. This will unlatch the seat and allow the seat to fold down. The rest of the instructions are the same as the passenger side.

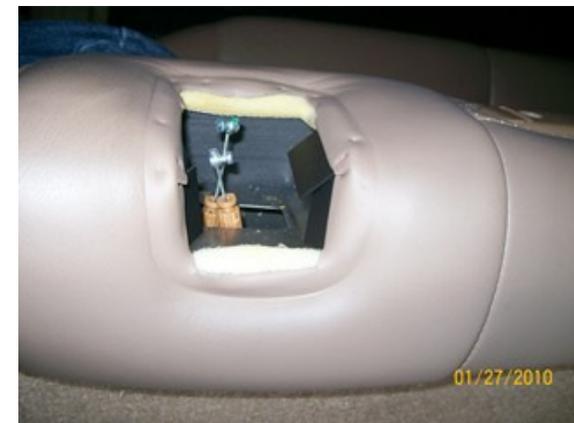
### **Step 4 – Slide Cable Grommets Off of Lever Mechanism**

See passenger side instructions.

### **Step 5 – Remove the Lever Mechanism**

See passenger side instructions. You will now have a hole on the driver’s side of the seat with two cables sticking out of it.

**Be sure to keep track of the left and right cable. Label them if you have to.** These cables probably won’t reach into the wrong holes and it’s fairly obvious which comes from the right and which comes from the left, but better safe than sorry.



### Task 3 – Replace Passenger Side Lever Mechanism

Take the lever mechanism that was originally on the driver's side and reinstall it on the passenger side.

#### **Step 1 – Thread the Cable into the Lever Mechanism**

Put the seat in a 45 degree position and work from the outside of the car. This will give you more cable slack to work with and allow you to look down on what you are doing.

Thread the cable through the bottom of the lever mechanism. **Be sure to thread it into the side that is not broken.** Then place the lever mechanism back into the hole in the seat.



#### **Step 2 – Slide Cable Grommet onto Lever Mechanism**

**This is the hardest step. Be patient, be careful. You're almost done, so don't screw it up now.** Use the needle nose pliers to line up the grommet with the larger hole in the lever mechanism (see first picture below). Then pull the cable to pull the grommet into the lever mechanism. That's the easy part.

Now place the flat head screwdriver next to the grommet and force the grommet into its locking position. This is harder to do than sliding the grommet off because you are now trying to slide it into a smaller hole. I had to force the grommet over a little and then push the screwdriver between the hole and the grommet and then twist the screwdriver while pushing hard to the outside. It wasn't pretty and I scratched up the plastic pretty good, but it eventually went over. **OK, the hardest part is over. It's all downhill from here.**



<----- This picture was taken from the driver's side because I forgot to take a picture from the passenger side during this step.

When you are done with this step it should look something like this ----->



### Step 3 - Reattach the Cable to the Lever

You should be able to use your fingers or the needle nose pliers to reattach the cable onto the non-broken side of the lever. You may have to lay the seat completely flat to get enough slack in the cable.

After you have hooked the cable on the lever, put the seat in a 45 degree position (if it isn't already) and lift the lever until you see/hear the cable snap into the lever.



Again, these pictures are of the driver's side because I forgot to take pictures of the passenger side during this step.

On the passenger side there will only be one cable.



### Step 4 – Replace the Lever Mechanism Screws and Screw Hole Cover

Put the seat in a 45 degree position. Lift the lever and put the screws back in. Then put the screw hole cover back on. **Be careful not to put it on backwards.**



### Step 5 – Replace the Lever Cover

**It's a lot easier to get the cover back on than it was to take it off.**

Put the seat in a 45 degree position or fold it all the way down. Lift the lever with one hand and with the other hand place your thumb and forefinger on the bottom of the lever cover. Squeeze the bottom of the lever cover as you put it into the lever well at the base of the lever. Once the bottom of the cover is in, slide the lever cover down while snapping the top of the lever cover onto the lever.



**If it was your passenger side lever that was broken, congratulations, you're done. You just saved yourself at least \$200.**

#### **Task 4 – Replace Driver’s Side Lever Mechanism**

Take the lever mechanism that was originally on the passenger side and reinstall it on the driver’s side.

##### **Step 1 – Thread the Cables into the Lever Mechanism**

See passenger side instructions. Do this for both cables.

##### **Step 2 – Slide Cable Grommets onto Lever Mechanism**

See passenger side instructions. Do this for both cable grommets.

##### **Step 3 - Reattach the Cables to the Lever**

See passenger side instructions. Do this for both cables.

##### **Step 4 – Replace the Lever Mechanism Screws and Screw Hole Cover**

See passenger side instructions.

##### **Step 5 – Replace the Lever Cover**

See passenger side instructions.

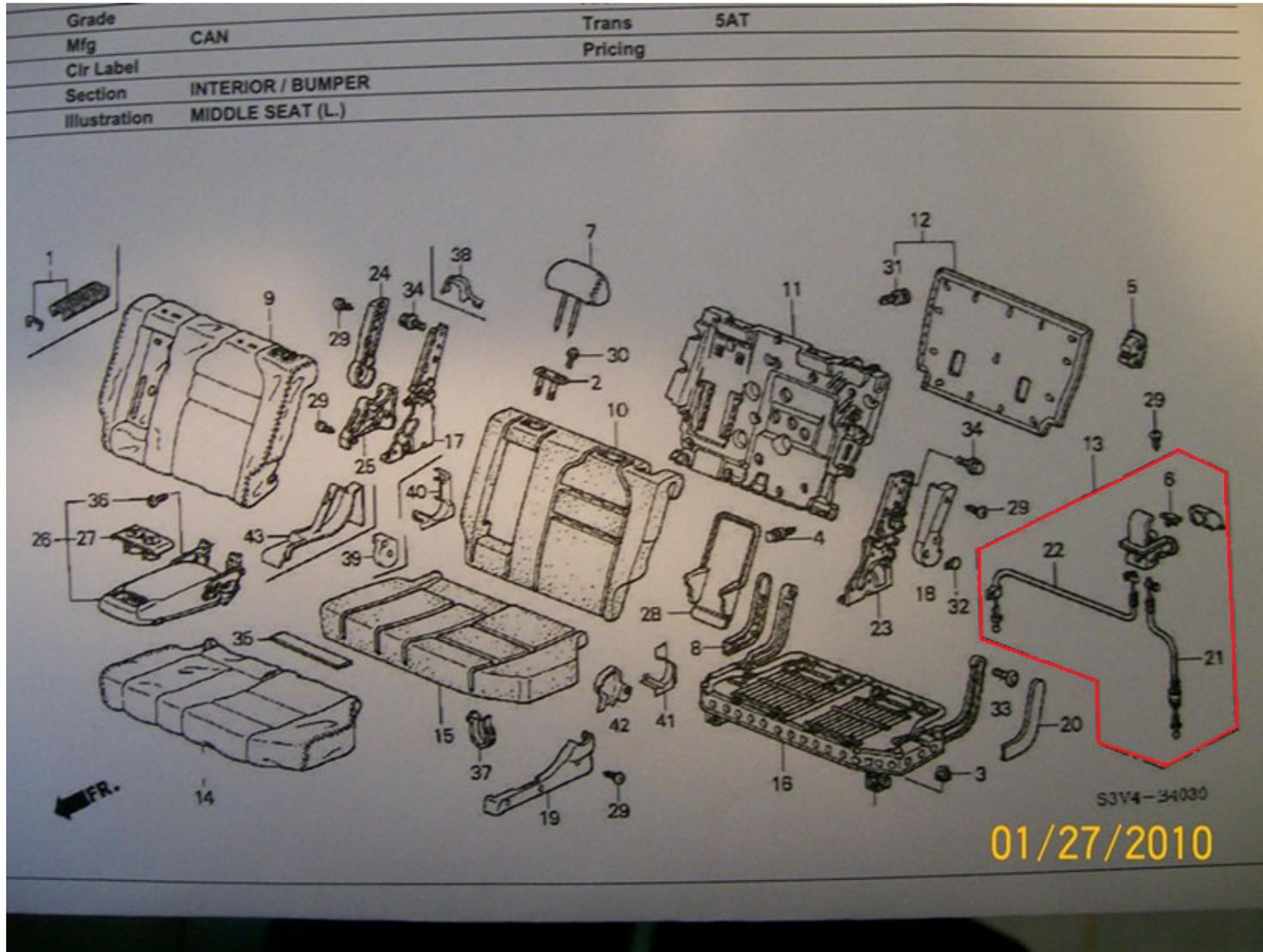
##### **Step 6 – Replace the Headrest**

Put the headrest back into the driver’s side seat

**Congratulations, you’re done. You just saved yourself about \$400.**

### Diagram of driver's side rear seat parts:

Each numbered part can be purchased separately. Note that the lever cannot be purchased separately. It has to be purchased as #13 which includes parts 6, 21, and 22.



Close Ups of Lever Cover and Lever Well

