

Attitude Adjustment: Lowering a Ram to Give it More Aggressive Looks and Handling

Posted on **April 30, 2014** by **Melissa Anderson**



When it comes to the stance of a truck, factory height just doesn't cut it. Whether you go up or down, the function and the overall look changes. Lifting a truck may increase its off-road capabilities, but there might be some drawbacks on the street. On the other hand, lowering a street-driven truck will not only improve its appearance, it'll also provide other benefits. When you drop a vehicle down you're lowering its center of gravity, which helps its roll from side to side and improves acceleration and braking performance.

For late-model Dodge Ram pickups the factory suspension is more comfortable than ever, but it's also very soft. Because the popularity of these trucks has grown and more people are using them for everyday use, the folks at Chrysler decided to make a few upgrades. Now not only does the Ram 1500 have an independent front suspension, the rear has a 4-link with soft coil springs. This is great for the average driver, and somehow, with the upgrades, the engineers were able to keep the payload capabilities about the same as if the truck had leaf springs.

For our Pindidit project regular cab Ram 1500, we decided to increase both the performance and styling by giving it a 2/4 drop. We would have preferred to go a few inches lower, but without heavy modifications, this is about the maximum drop you can give these trucks while maintaining functionality. When it came to choosing lowering parts, one of the first companies we looked to was McGaughys because we've had good experiences with some of the company's other quality products. There are two different kits for this particular truck and both are priced right. For those on a budget, you can choose lowered coil springs rather than dropped spindles. We chose the spindles because they lower the truck while keeping the geometry close to stock.

These days, most vehicles have sway bars to help with handling and our project truck was no different. However, the rear suspension is so soft that it can be dangerous to go even just a little heavy with your right foot. Some Ram trim levels come with front and rear sway bars, but unfortunately ours only came with a flimsy version up front. For the fix, we turned to Hellwig Products, a company that specializes in vehicle handling. The kit it offers includes front and rear bars that are made from high quality, large diameter 4140 chrome-moly steel and have polyurethane bushings to complete the package.

Of course we couldn't just drop this truck down and continue to sport factory rollers. We decided to retire the factory 17s and pick up a set of 24 x 10 Lexani R-Four wheels that completely transform the look of this Ram. Then we covered them with 305/35R24 Falken Ziex S/TZ05, an all-season tire specifically designed for trucks like ours. Featuring comfort and performance, these tires did the trick. Once everything was hammered out, we met up with Pindidit at Premiere Motorsports Group facility. Though we handled the task at a nice shop using special tools, the same job can be done at home with simple hand tools. Either way, check out the steps to restyle and add better handling to a late-model Ram.

Falken Tire
800.723.2553
Falkentire.com

Hellwig Products
800.435.5944
Hellwigproducts.com

Lexani Wheels
800.833.9700
Lexani.com

McGaughys Suspension Parts
559.226.8196
Mcgaughys.com

Pindidit
Pindidit.com

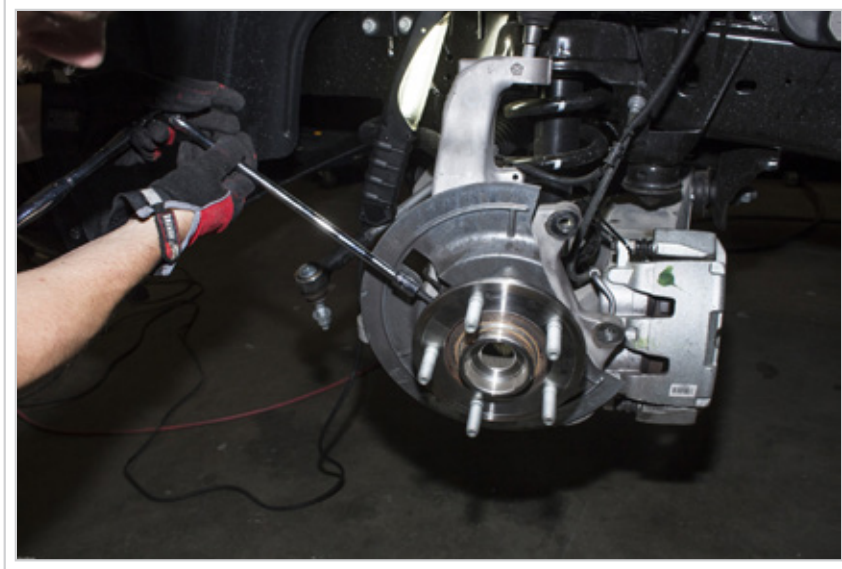
Premiere Motorsport Group
951.272.9800



Here's the Deluxe 2/4-drop kit from McGaughys. The front is relatively straight forward as the new spindles raise the wheel hub for the drop. For the rear, a set of springs will provide a 4-inch drop. Since the drop changes the position of the rearend, new rear sway bar end links, bump stops and a track bar relocating bracket are included as well.



With the truck supported on jack stands or a lift, begin by removing the wheels. Since we're swapping spindles, the tie rods must be removed.



To get the brakes off, the two bolts on the back must be removed in order to get the calipers off. The rotors will simply slide off the hub. Don't forget to remove the ABS sensor wire using a hex driver bit attached to a ratchet.



If your ball joints are worn out and need replacing, use a pickle fork and air hammer to remove them. Typically this will damage the boots, so if you plan to reuse them, strike the spindle with a hammer perpendicular to the ball joint. It may take a few whacks, but it will eventually pop out.



The wheel hub will need to be removed. To get it off, remove these three bolts on the back of the spindle.



The hubs on the McGaughys spindle are attached with the factory bolts. For added security, we applied thread locker before tightening them down.



As you can see, the McGaughys drop spindles are attached to the suspension just like factory.



Before you forget, attach the ABS sensor and tighten it down.





On the lower side, the spindle is secured to the ball joint using the supplied nut. Because the wheels are essentially being raised up in relation to the suspension, the excess threads must be cut off to fit the stock wheels. Even if you're running large wheels, you might want to do this anyway so that you can use your 17-inch spare if you blow a front tire. After the brakes are on, the front is finished and the wheels can be reinstalled.



Moving on to the rear, you'll need to support the rearend and disconnect the shocks.



Before you can remove the rear springs, the track bar will need to be disconnected from this bracket on the rearend.



The rearend can be lowered to remove the factory coil springs.



Since the bump stops are too large and won't allow the lowered suspension to travel upwards, they are discarded. For added clearance, the bump stop mount should be removed using a cut-off tool.



The new bump stops bolt directly on the rearend.



As the rearend moves up for the drop, the geometry changes and the track bar needs to be mounted in a corrected new position. To fix the problem, the McGaughys kit includes the relocating bracket that bolts to the old mounting holes for the track bar.



The new rear coils have a different spring rate that allows them to compress more to lower the truck. They are placed in easily just like the stock versions and lock into place by raising the rearend.



Once the rearend is raised up enough the track bar can be bolted to the relocating bracket. Then the factory shocks can be reattached to complete the drop.

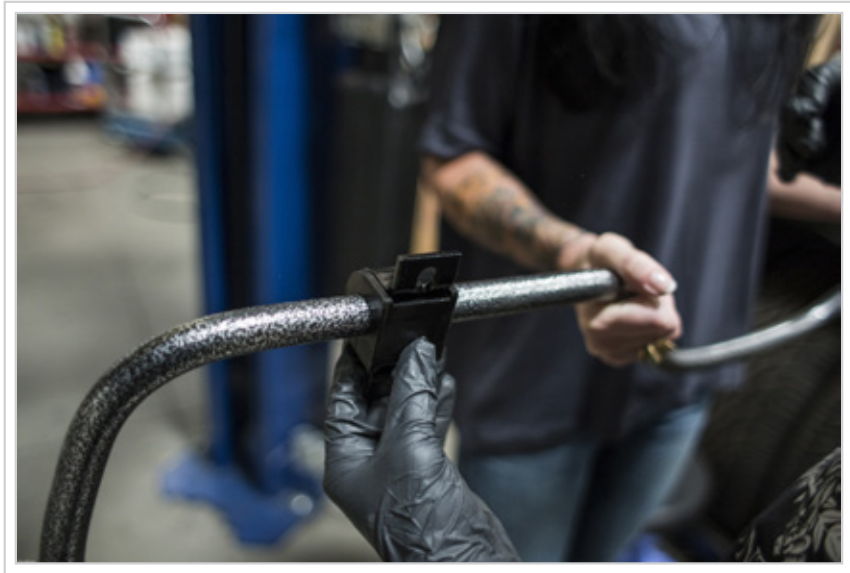


To further improve this Ram's handling, we decided to upgrade the sway bars with better quality versions from Hellwig Products. Remove the stock version by first taking off a few bolts.

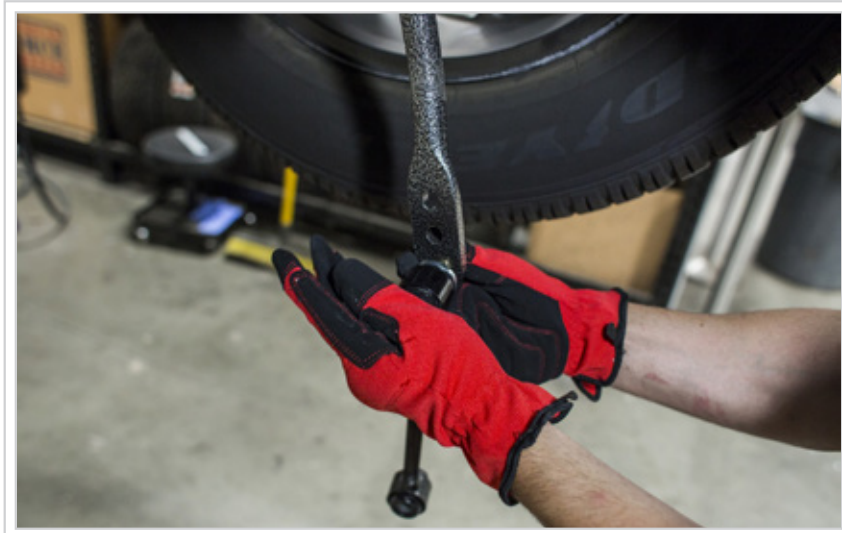




The heavy-duty Hellwig sway bar can be attached the same way as the factory version.



Though our Ram didn't come with a rear sway bar, the rearend already had the necessary holes to attach one. With the mounting brackets in place, the Hellwig sway bar can be placed on.



The Hellwig rear sway bar also comes with a few different mounting holes and adjustable end links so you can tailor it to your vehicle's specific height. The bushings are lubricated and slipped in the holes on the end links before they are bolted between the sway bar and the frame.



With the sway bar installed, the rear suspension should look like this.



Another important place to look for more traction is with tires. Most stock tires aren't very wide, which doesn't really do much for those who want to drive more aggressively. We decided to go with Falken Ziex S/TZ05 for many reasons, including the fact that they come in lower profile sizes while still being weight rated to support a 1/5-ton truck. This 305/35R24 size fits a giant 24-inch wheel and the 10.6-inch tread width is about 2 inches wider than the factory rubber. Also, the state-of-the-art design is stylish and engineered for wet and dry performance, as well as noise reduction. Another good thing about this design is that it's non-directional, meaning they can be rotated easily to maximize wear.





We stepped it up just a little bit more by accenting the Ram's lowered height with a new set of large rollers. With the 2/4-drop complete, you're easily able to fit a 24 x 10-inch wheel. Knowing this, we took a peek at the many stylish wheels of Lexani and locked eyes on the R-Four design. Once the tires were mounted, the wheels were bolted in place and the truck was lowered back on the ground. After doing any height altering suspension modification like this one, you need to get the front suspension aligned for maximum traction and even tire wear. After doing so we hit the streets and could feel a noticeable difference in the overall performance of this truck.

Text by Kevin Aguilar and Photos by Jason Mulligan

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