

Replacing your Bose head unit

If you're reading this, you are considering replacing your Bose head unit with an aftermarket replacement.

With the Bose system, you cannot just swap out the head unit without the use of a special adapter. The Bose systems send a low-level signal to each speaker. Each speaker, in-turn, has an amplifier that amplifies that low-level signal.

If you replace the head unit without using an adapter, the new head unit will likely send an amplified signal to each speaker. The speaker amps will then re-amplify that signal and you'll end up with a very LOUD and distorted sound.

You may also think you can just remove the Bose amps but this is not a good idea because those Bose speakers are only 1 Ohm speakers which will be incompatible with your new head unit.

All these issues can be resolved by buying an adapter that connects between your new head unit and the Bose amps/speakers. The job of this adapter is to basically de-tune the amplified signal from your new head unit into the low-level signal your Bose amps expect. This means that the wattage output of your new head unit won't mean much since the adapter will turn that strong wattage into low-level anyway. Even with this adapter, my stereo sounds better than it did with the OEM Bose unit.

In my case, I didn't want to create a rolling-disco in my car. I wasn't out to upgrade the system for stereo-competitions or anything like that. I wanted to replace the head unit to add more features (XM satellite radio) for as little money as possible.

If money is no object, you can simply replace everything (Bose unit, Bose amps, Bose speakers). If you're replacing everything, you obviously will not need the adapter I mentioned above.

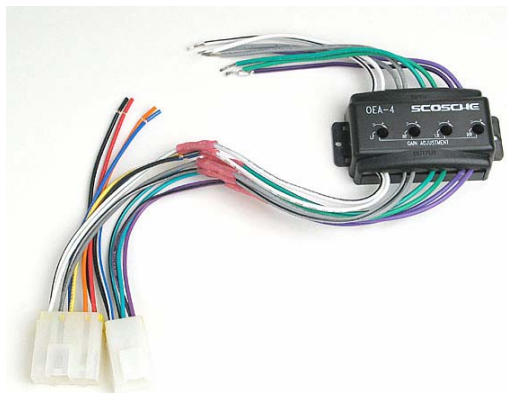
When I replaced my head unit, I went to Crutchfield.com. I am a fan of their great customer service. When I went to their website and told it that my car was a 1995 Infiniti J30, the website said it had NOTHING for me. What?!? I realized something was amiss. A friend of mine has a 1995 Nissan Maxima and the Bose unit in his car is identical to mine. I then decided to fool the Crutchfield website so I told it my car was a 95 Maxima w/the Bose system. Once I did, plenty of choices appeared. Keep in mind that this trick only works if you're only replacing the head unit. If you're replacing speakers, this won't work because the speaker sizes between the Maxima and J30 are different.

One of the reasons why I like Crutchfield is that they throw in all kinds of freebies. In the case of the J30, you will need one of those plastic storage pockets (free), and you'll need a Nissan FM antenna adapter (free). The Infiniti/Nissan antenna is not your conventional FM antenna connector. The Nissan/Infiniti FM antenna (diversity antenna) has two prongs instead of the single prong you're used to.

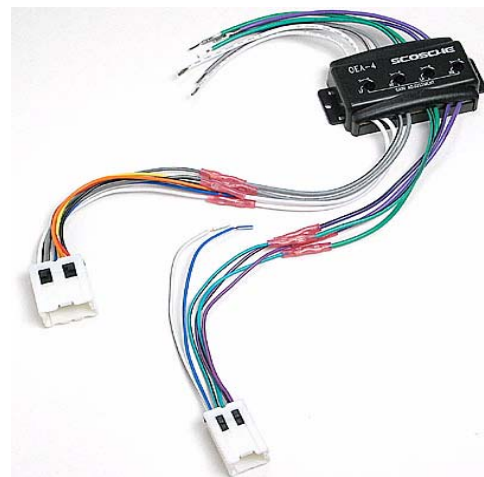
The last adapter you need (not free) is the adapter that will turn the amplified speaker signal from your new head unit into a low-level signal for your Bose amps/speakers. This adapter will cost around \$50. Crutchfield sells this adapter as well. The adapter I used is made by Scosche.

There are two flavors of this adapter. One is for cars up to 1993 and one for 1994 and up. The only difference in these two models of adapters is the OEM wire harness. The 1989-93 harness is different than the 1994+ harness.

The adapters look like this:



1989-1993



1994-up

In any case, the Crutchfield web site will suggest the proper harness when you select a head unit as long as you told it your car is a Nissan Maxima with the Bose system.

Crutchfield will add the free storage pocket and FM antenna adapter to your shopping cart when you get ready to make your purchase.

To mount the unit, you will do what's called ISO-mounting. This means that you will use the factory metal brackets attached to your Bose unit to support the new head unit. The metal brackets attached to your Bose unit are on VERY TIGHT. If you use a screwdriver alone, you will likely strip the heads of the screws. I had to use an impact driver to remove that bracket from the Bose unit.

On the top half of the brackets, you will mount your new head unit. The lower half will contain the plastic storage compartment.

The electrical connections should be very easy. As you see above, the Scosche adapter contains a harness that plugs directly to your factory wiring harness. The bare wires on the adapter connect to the wires coming from your new head unit.

The bare wires on the adapter are clearly marked on the wire insulation telling you what they are. The new head unit will come with a manual that identifies the wires on the new head unit.

Don't worry about this too much. 99.9% of the replacement head units have industry-standard color-coding for the wiring. Because of this, the bare wires on the Scosche adapter will likely match the wire colors on the new head unit. It took me about 5-10 minutes to do the wire connections.

Here is a picture of the end-result.

