

# MAGAZINES AR15 Magazines

[feed me seymour]

Glen Zediker

**The top coil orientation is critical. That's the one that loops into the follower. The turned-in end of the top of the coil should be level with the straight section on the opposite side of the spring. If it's angled down, it shouldn't be. The one on the left is sitting pretty; the other isn't. Pliers!**



**This one is ugly, but common. It's dead nose down. Here it is fixed, plus a little. By bending the wire to support the follower at its nose it just about prevents it from tipping that direction.**



*ORIGIN: This is a jist of an article I did for another magazine. I added a few things that I don't send to magazines due to space concerns.*

The magazine is a part of the rifle, and it's a moving part. The magazine feeds the daggone thing its rounds so it can fire its bullets. That's how important the magazine is.

I get a whopping lot of correspondence from my folks complaining about magazine problems. I never liked the answer I gave them, and that's led to this article. I have been shooting off of the same Kroger-sack full of Vietnam-era Colt-brand I bought in 1977 for two dollars apiece. They all work. "Well, I use old maga-

zines with metal followers and never have any problems..." I finally got some new magazines! And then I had to fix them. So now I have some answers.

I used to have a harsh outlook on magazine function. The first malfunction was the last for that magazine. I literally threw it in the trash can if one ever didn't work once. I don't do that anymore. Thinking back during all that ban-time I fretted a good deal over the 30s I sent to the dump. It's easy now to fix them. I say "now" because of all the upgraded internals available now. I say "upgraded" because why wouldn't you want to make it better as long as you're fixing it?

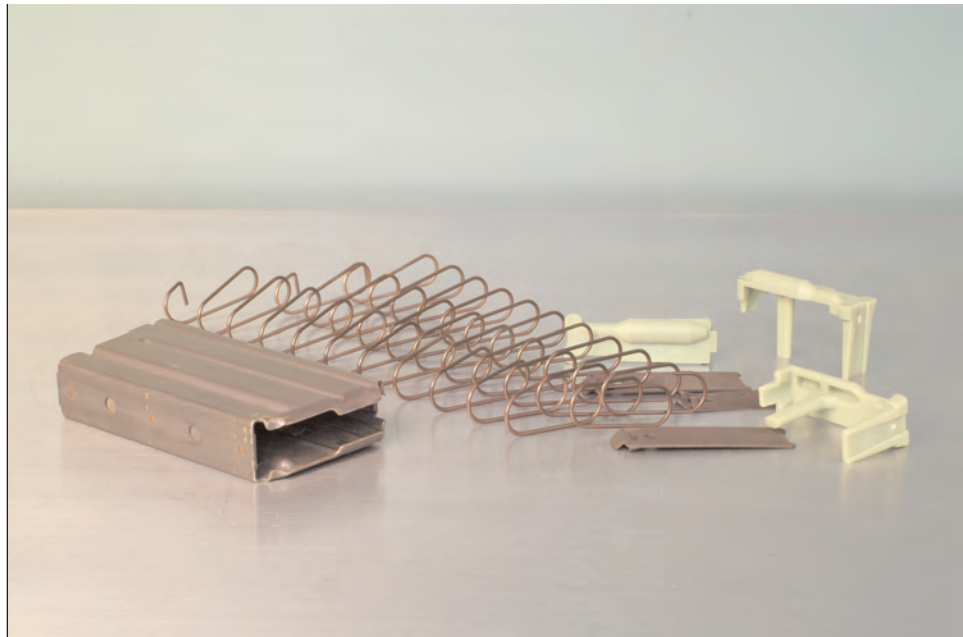
When an AR15 magazine malfunctions it's usually because the follower didn't behave and the nose of the round stuck down and then stuck in. Sometimes it sticks the other way and the bolt rides over the waiting round. The reasons followers don't behave come from their orientation in the magazine, and, of course, their design.

If you take a finger (should use your own for reasons I can't go into here) or the eraser-end of a pencil and push nilly-willy around on a follower you sometimes can make it stick either end down. On a less intense scale, this can happen when the rounds are dealt in and then pushed up. When you can't make a follower stick from pushing on the front and rear of it, that magazine should function. The newer follower designs, when they are correctly oriented atop the spring, were drawn up to help that happen.

The deal behind the "green" follower the armed forces went to was to solve a common problem of failures to feed the last two rounds from some bum 30-round magazines. The change was to add a skirt to the front and extra length to the skirt at the rear to help stop the follower from tilting. These ride against the inside front and rear box walls. This follower is better. Get a dozen in a baggie from Brownell's for very little money.

I say, however, that there are fewer follower problems and more spring problems. A box magazine is spring-driven, and there are differences in springs. Chrome silicon (CS), when exploited to its capacity by the

**Fixing up an AR15 magazine is easy. Remove the base plate (how varies), pull out the old spring and follower, clean the inside of the box, replace with a new spring and follower. Check the top coil orientation with the follower, fix if needed. Do not neglect this! It ought to work now, especially if you use the zoot-capri parts. Shown is an example of such. This is a Brownell's green follower and chrome silicon spring package, both built for a 20-round box, and comes in a 3-pack. Brownell's can also sell you an outstanding magazine ready to go with these parts installed.**



spring maker, is always better than music wire. CS magazine springs put a more consistent, constant load on the follower and, this is big, just don't change. They can be left sitting compressed without getting "soft." This is a huge concern and potentially disastrous circumstance for a tactical pro. If you want to check a spring for adequate load, put two rounds in the magazine and push them down only about one-eighth-inch. They should spring right and fully back up. If they don't the spring is sacked.

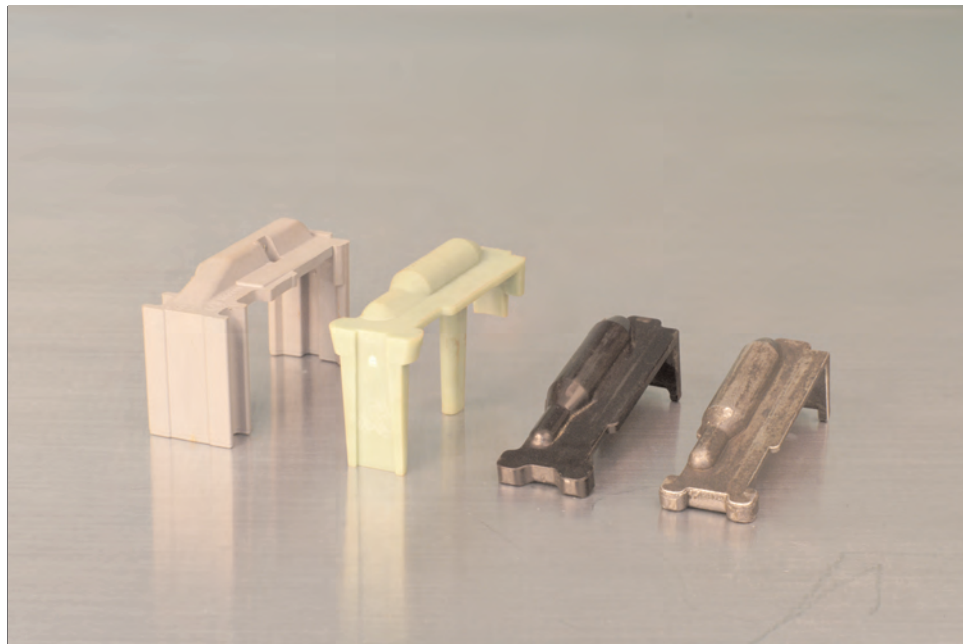
**It's skin deep. Here's one of eight similar I take to Camp Perry. It's an old Colt-brand made late-'60s. Internally it should now be inferior to new ones, but it doesn't work that way, and that's because this one works. Off as it may sound, the aluminum GI mags are usually way on better than commercial steel magazines. If you see one that's blotchy gold or silver that's just the finish worn down to the anodizing. Don't pay collector prices for Colt, though. Adventureline and Simmonds are others that are very good. Plastic magazines are for plastic rifles.**



The correct orientation for the follower atop the spring (neither installed in the box) is either dead level or with the bullet-end sitting a little higher than the back end. Dead level is good. If you install enough different springs in enough magazines, you'll notice that not all springs will do this. You have to help. Pliers are the tool and the idea is to get the follower sitting flat or a little nose-up. That's done by tweaking on the top coil. It's common in many that I've disassembled to see the follower nose down when it's installed onto the spring. When it gets back into the box and buttoned up, that orientation can return. Even if the spring is crammed in there and it seems that there's plenty of pressure against the follower to keep it up and sitting level against its stops, when the rounds are dealt in and the follower goes down, the shift or tilt happens.

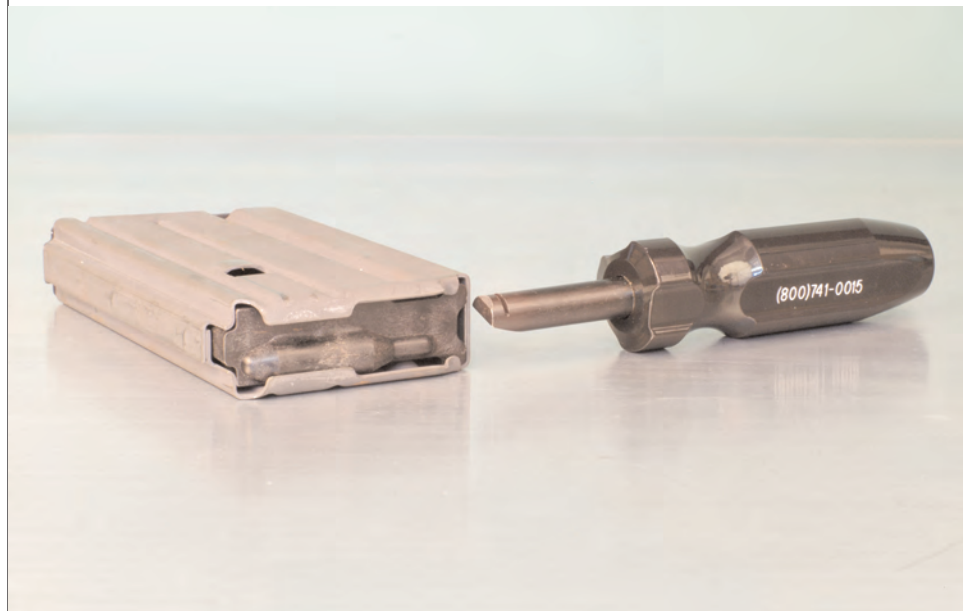
***This is a follower. A whole line of them. It follows the rounds up from the magazine. I think it should be called a "tray" because that's really what it does. There's not a lot to gain from a different surface design; most are virtually identical in function. The guide ridge is there to orient the cartridges correctly. The real improvements have come in changes to the front and rear guides or skirts I call them. The old-style (Colt original, and similar) had virtually no support at the bullet end. The newest-greatest designs, like the Magpul, make it just about impossible for the follower not to sit level throughout its travel. I'm fer 'em. This follower goes in all my magazines now, except for the old ones that already work. If it's not broke then fix it until it is. [left to right]: Magpul, "green," ancient Colt metal, newer Colt plastic***

***More serious problems can sometimes be solved using a feed-lip tool from Brownell's. You kind of have to know what you're trying to do before expecting to get good results with it, but it sure makes the job easy. The feed lips mostly control how and how much the round pivots upward as it's starting into the chamber. Go carefully. They crack easy. I use this primarily to make AR15 magazines work with different cartridges, such as .22 PPC.***



*There's more to say, but another time. Until then, take care of magazines. Clean them periodically (at least once a year). Lube with dry lube if at all. I don't. Oil traps grit.*

Right now, if I had to say, and I imagine I really should say something, Brownell's probably has the best magazines out of the box (that's funny of anyone. They will sell you one with a green follower and chrome-silicon spring, and it will be inside a box that seems just as correct as can be, judging by the examples I had on hand. Of the CS products available, I tend to favor the SSS Inc. springs.



## **SOURCES**

Brownell's Inc.

641-623-5401

[www.brownells.com](http://www.brownells.com)

Superior Shooting Systems Inc.

806-323-9488

[www.SuperiorShootingSystems.com](http://www.SuperiorShootingSystems.com)