

Instructions for microwave drying wooden pegs.

First the disclaimer: This process has worked for me but I can assume no responsibility for how it works for you. Any wood will absorb moisture if left in a high humidity environment. The pegs are hardwood and resistant to some extent when stored in a typical air-conditioned training office. In an unconditioned factory they should be stored with a desiccant. In the event the pegs do absorb moisture, they will appear to fit too tightly in the car body holes, or require more than finger strength to remove. In that event, please follow the process below for drying the pegs.

Materials you will need:

One-quart Ziploc bag, two bowls or plates, and paper towels

Here is the technique using microwaves:

1. Seal the wooden pegs inside the plastic bag. A one-quart Ziploc bag works well. This also keeps the microwave oven clean. The LeanMan KIT contains 96 pegs for each set of 20 plain cars and two painted cars. Typically, there are about 115 to 120 pegs counting the spares in the kit.
2. Place pegs (which are inside the bag) in the microwave. Set microwave at full power and the timer for thirty seconds.
3. Turn on the microwave. Watch the bag closely. When it fills with steam but before it looks like it's going to go "bang" - turn off the microwave. The bag expansion is a good temperature indicator. If the wood is heated too long steam will be generated inside the fibers and strange effects occur such as hidden fissures.
4. Remove the bag of pegs carefully from the microwave. Mindful of the steam, open the bag and dump the pegs from the bag into one of the bowls (or plates) and fan air across the pegs. Let the steam evaporate by dumping the pegs into the second bowl and back to the first, etc, until dry. The pegs should be hot. Dry the inside of the bag with a paper towel.
5. Seal the pegs inside the plastic bag again.
6. Place pegs (which are inside the bag) in the microwave. Set microwave at full power and the timer for 30 seconds (or less matching the time used in step 3).
7. Turn on the microwave. Watch the bag closely. When it fills with steam but before it looks like it's going to go "bang" - turn off the microwave. For a smaller number of pieces use about 25 seconds and only a single heating.
8. Remove the bag of pegs carefully from the microwave. Mindful of the steam, open the bag and dump the pegs from the bag into one of the bowls (or plates) and fan air across the pegs. Let the steam evaporate by dumping the pegs into the second bowl and back to the first, etc, until dry. The pegs may still be hot. Cover the pegs with a paper towel and allow to cool before trying them out in a car body. Try them in a car body to assure an easy slip-fit. If too tight, repeat the drying process one more cycle.

Note: Weighing the pegs before and after should show approximately a 1% reduction. When there is no longer a significant weight loss you will have dried the wood sufficiently. Over drying the wood does not harm the wood but it may make the pegs too loose in the car body. The design calls for a slip-fit of a 7/32" (0.218") dia peg in a 0.221" dia car hole.