

# Heat Up Your Hands

BY STEVE LITA

BRRRRR. THERE'S NOTHING WORSE THAN not being able to feel the throttle because your digits are too cold. And then there's that aching feeling when you let go, and your hand is shaped like a claw, and you can't completely open it until you thaw it by wrapping it around a cup of hot chocolate.

I always toughed it out in cold weather — until a buddy let me ride his BMW with factory heated grips. From that day forward, I was hooked. It was a chilly spring morning, and the heated grips made the ride so much more comfortable that I almost forgot about my cold knees.

Heated grip kits are available in a variety of sizes and styles, though I'd suggest getting a better one with a built-in thermostat. I chose the Big Bike Parts Closed End Heated Grip Kit. Though it's intended for installation on Honda Gold Wings, I had no problem installing the kit on my Suzuki GS1100.

The grips were slightly longer than my stock ones, measuring 5.75". But all I had to do was loosen the master cylinder, clutch lever mount, and switch gear, and slide them up about half an inch. Not all bikes will allow this, so check for clearance first. The Big Bike Parts kit includes a neat little handlebar bracket that lets you position the temperature control within easy reach. The controller has four positions with three temperature settings: low, medium, high, and off. The terminals are a high-quality snap-together style, and I used a dab of dielectric grease in each to seal out the elements.

The install took only a couple of hours, which included running to Radio Shack for fuse taps (see sidebar). As always, use care when moving your fuel tank to make room for the wire harness, and make sure to run the wires so they won't chafe or get pinched. I usually run accessory wires along the path of the factory main harness for a clean installation.



**1** You can use a sharp knife to cut off the old grips. Or try blowing compressed air into the ends while working them off.



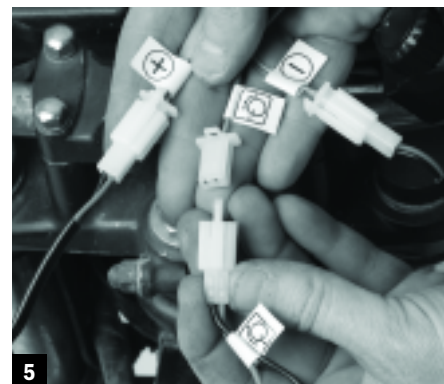
**2** Hairspray makes a good adhesive for the new grips. It stays slick for a few seconds, letting you slide the grips in place before it becomes tacky.



**3** Remove (or lift) the gas tank to run wires to the fuse block. Attach the red wire to a live terminal when the ignition is on; black goes to the chassis ground.



**4** Install the handlebar mounting bracket in a convenient location. The thermostat attaches with double-sided tape.



**5** The thermostat connects to the main fused harness, and the grips each have a connector, too. Zip-tie the excess harness, reinstall the tank, and you're done. RB

## Fuse Taps

Not all bikes are equipped with switched accessory terminals on their fuse blocks to allow for add-on electric gear. So, one version of the grip kit instructions suggests hooking up the power wire harness directly to the battery positive terminal. But I didn't think that was such a good idea. One episode of absentmindedness — forgetting to turn off the grips when I turn off the bike — and I'd have a dead battery.

You're better off tapping into a terminal on the fuse block that's live only when the ignition is on. It should be easy enough to find; just use a test light to try each terminal, one at a time, until you find one that meets the criteria. Then use a fuse tap to hook up the wires.

They're available at most auto parts stores or Radio Shack. Incidentally, the wire harness for the grip kit also has an in-line fuse to protect it from short circuits. ■



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