

# 2011-2015 Ford Explorer Sync 2/My Ford Touch to Sync 3/3.4 Retrofit

rev 1

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Hello and thank you for your interest in this guide, for starters some of this guide is applicable to most 2011-2016 Ford models with Sync 2 but in this case of this guide, our test subject providing the imagery are from a 2015 Explorer Limited.

If You have a 2011-2013 Explorer the USB hub section of this will be slightly different, removal should be the same but there will be an additional power harness for the USB hub you will need.

Also there will be no APIM programming in this guide as I used a preprogrammed kit, apologizes in advance for any inconvenience caused by this. Some swearing used in guide.

Tools Needed:

- Good Sturdy set of Plastic Interior Pry Tools. (crutchfield is a good set)
- 7mm socket for everything.
- Torx T<> Driver for screen mounting brackets.
- Tiny Flathead Screwdriver and/or Pick Tool
- (optional) Few Tiny Zip Ties for cable management

# Taking Note/Questions

- This Google Doc will be updated/maintained for some time, so some parts/wording might change, feedback and constructive suggestions are welcome and I will add anything within reason/sense to the doc *if* it is helpful.
- Before we begin document every extra feature your explorer has, if you buy a preprogrammed kit it *should* have everything there, but this is just an extra step of insurance.
  - go into your climate panel and take a picture of everything there, make note of any heated seat, wheel, rear climate options etc. (if equipped)
  - Go into settings and take a picture of your ambient light, sound system, and surround/sony settings. (if equipped)
- I Will be making a FAQ so if you have any questions feel free to reach out and I will do my best to compile it in a later update of this document.
- Note for people equipped with the dual screen cluster:
  - The Media Section Largely functions like normal, it will also display the artist, track, time played and name of phone when connected to Apple Carplay only once a song is selected, if a song autoplays upon first connect it will remain as "Audio Off" until you manually change the song or it changes itself once the current song finishes playing. (Android Auto not tested)
  - NAV menu will no longer display what street your on but retains its compass feature.
  - The Phone screen completely functions as normal once connected via bluetooth.
- <placeholder bullet point>
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# Step 1

Start by removing the “Winglet” Dashboard Trim Pieces, the majority of prying you will be doing is prying directly towards you not upwards towards the roof but towards you/the rear included is a ref pic of the metal and plastic clips rearside so you can see exactly what I mean. Best to start at the top near the vents (red arrows) and work your way down to the main clip (yellow arrow) holding the trim piece place, for some reason ford used one circular ribbed exterior trim clip for each piece so its really in there. So with enough persuasion you can get the panel slightly lifted, and you can begin to work and feel your fingers/tool to down and around where the green arrows are is and feel for the remaining clips, and as close to the clips as you can pry them out without breaking the trim piece, it does require some effort though. Once both are out set them to the side.



## Step 2

Now we will move onto removing the HVAC panel and dash vents, first undo the four 7mm bolts pointed to with the **blue arrows**, now when it comes to actually detaching the entire panel; for whatever reason ford used semi transparent disposable silverware-like plastic painted black for the dash vent trims, my FUCKING god its brittle, like will disintegrate at the wrong look brittle, DO FUCKING NOT grip it from the screen area like I did (if its any motivation these trim bezels are 600-800 bucks used), DO NOT pry at the panel at any other spots, where the **yellow arrows** are pointing with a plastic not metal pry tool, apply even steady NON ROCKING pressure to the clips at the top, while gently using your fingers on the lower sides where the bolts were, however the main goal is to undo the topmost clips without breaking the plastic like I did, it will break with little to no force; its awful. if it breaks im so sorry but it was bound to happen and that was about as minimal as it will get.



## Step 2a

If your HVAC trim piece decides to also randomly explode like mine did (if it didn't, skip to 3!) at the top just know the little vent arms do clip back in if they pop out (pictured below) as you can see the plastic is so brittle the securing tabs that secure the trim piece into the vent at the top broke off in the vent assembly's themselves.... Fml.

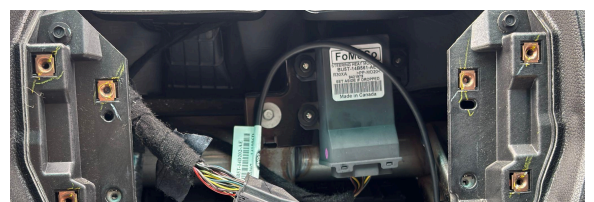
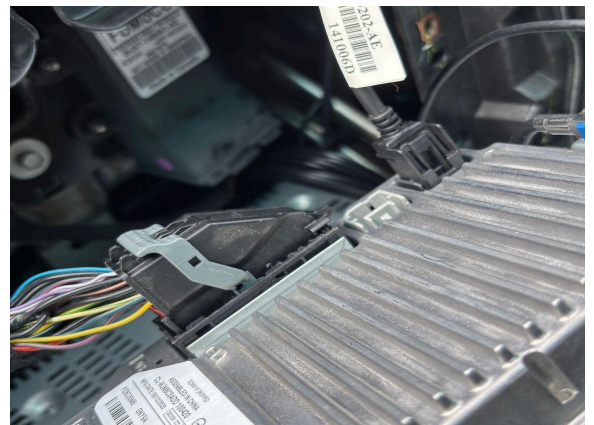


## Step 3

Now we can start with getting the APIM removed, we can start by undoing the four 7mm bolts marked in the **green arrows**; once 3 of 4 bolts are removed, be sure to support the APIM edges with your fingers so it doesn't accidentally flop out, though I don't think anyone will be particularly sad if APIM itself breaks, but you don't want to accidentally damage any wires connected to it; so support it.

Once you get the **final bolt** out, gently pull the APIM out towards you and tilt the top of the unit towards you, peering down the back (picture 2) you will notice on the bottom right of the module one smaller black connector with a tab on top, press and remove it, it's simply a mini USB connector on the inside. turning our attention to the left, we find a large multi wire connector with a swing lock and center tab combo. If you possess little twink hands like mine the easiest way I have found to undo this one-handed while supporting the APIM is with my index finger press the center tab while lifting with my thumb, this allows you to apply equal force on both releasing mechanisms, if you have big meaty dilf hands *nice* but- a tiny flathead in one hand and lifting the swing tab with your free hand/finger should do the trick, now be warned the APIM will drop so have a knee, elbow, helping hand or microfiber in the center console to prevent/brace its drop. once you release the APIM from its home ignore the urge to burn and/or hurl it into the woods and place it aside for now, once you do that it should look like (picture 3), however our work is not done yet as we have to swap out our USB hub now you COULD try to claw it out from the face plate using a small enough screwdriver but your guaranteed to destroy the plastics surrounding it, and you will destroy your wrists trying to give your center console the craziest double wrist fist of its life, so we're gonna take the easier way. Noting the green arrows pointing to four more 7mm screws in (picture 3), we can now remove the CD drive module as well. Doing this (and more) will help us access the backside of the USB hub and its related connectors.

(note the second image is the Sync 3 APIM but it's the only closeup I had of the connectors.)



## Step 3a

Once you get the four 7mm bolts out for the CD drive module, there is more than enough slack in the wiring for you quite literally just pull it forward and swing it out to the right, there's four pigtails in the back of the module so the weight is evenly distributed; so let it gently hang while we further continue our work.



## Step 4

Now that we have the CD Drive module out we can turn our attention to the Climate control module, damn that mf kinda small. Anyway its one 7mm, it might be a little hard to spot (sarcasm) so I made sure its properly shown in the first image below (sarcasm), once you have that one bolt removed, while sliding the module to the passenger side of the car, tilt the module up slightly and pull. (you might have to gently rock it up and down while pulling to the right as its hinged awkwardly), once you have the module out of its spot, it will also have enough slack (for you to just pull it out and hang it off to the left, also pictured below. Once its all said and done you should have a good open workspace in the dash.



## Step 5

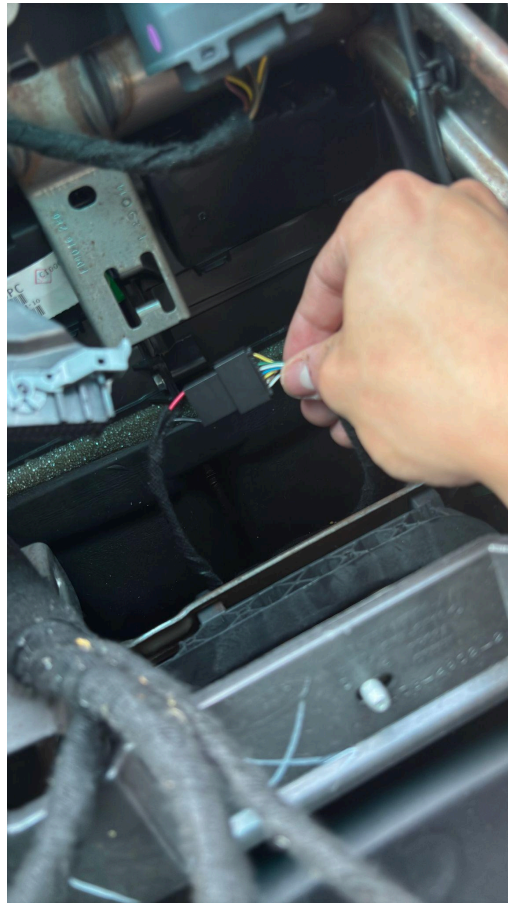
Now that we have this big open space in our dash, we can lean forward and peer directly downwards into the void, looking to the bottom left you should be able to spot your USB hub buried under some ribbed plastic piece for the front center console pocket. Reach down with your hand and with steady firm pressure, press on the rear of the hub and it should release from its pocket. Damage free.

With your right hand hold the edges of the free but dangling hub, and with your left hand reach behind the hub and feel for the two connectors attached, it's a similar but miniaturized setup to the APIM, tiny mini USB connector with clip on the bottom right, and to the left a multi wire connector, no swing mechanism but a clip holding it, once those two connectors are released you should be able to just pull the hub out of the cubby space.



## Step 6

Now it's time to start putting things together! Start by getting your aftermarket/alternate Carplay compatible hub if you got a kit it \*should\* come with a hub like mine, simply pop it out of its bezel and we can get back down to our front console cubby, insert the hub from the rearward in and fish the wire dangling off the rear through, in the case of my 2015, other 2015's and 2014's we simply have to connect the two wire dangling connector off the rear and connect it into the multi wire harness we unplugged from our hub earlier, and attach the USB cable to the only USB port on the hub in the rear, then press the USB hub firmly in until it clicks.



## Step 7

Now I Will admit the excitement got to me a little and I forgot to take as many photos of assembly than disassembly, installation however you can also just reference the images of disassembly, now that the hub is in you can get the HVAC control module in get the hinged side in first; it should slide/semi hinge in. Make sure the HVAC control module wire is not trapped under the module accidentally and still routed through its notch in the dash (pic 1) once you verify that is good, line up the CD Player Module using its alignment pegs and begin hand threading then with a tool tighten down the four 7mm screws we removed earlier back in (pic 2).



## Step 8

Now that we have that spaghetti mess of wires now stuffed back into the dash we can turn our attention to the APIM's themselves, assuming you did not ignore my advice earlier and give your Sync 2 a 3 pointer straight into your local interstate highway lets hold them up side by side and make sure the connectors are lined up (essentially making sure the modules are facing the same direction and are on the same side), once that is done grab your Torx driver and undo the 2 tiny bolts on each side and transfer them to your new Sync 3 APIM. Once done we can move onto the GPS antenna.

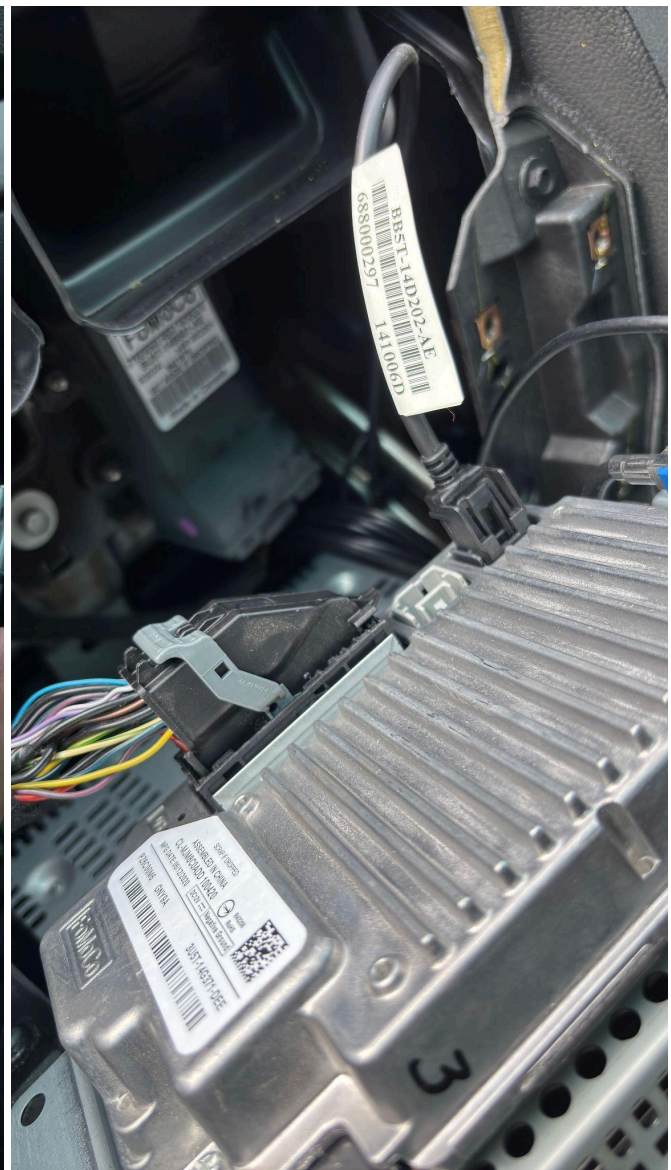


## Step 9

Now we can grab our GPS antenna included in our kit, or assuming you bought your own separately when you self assembled this kit, depending on what antenna you purchased or usually what is included in a kit, it most likely will have an internal magnet + external adhesive pad combo, in my situation I attached mine under the passenger side dash to a metal bar running from side to side, I didn't get a picture but any metal surface that doesn't have any metal above it will work fine just use proper judgement and common sense.

## Step 10

Now that our GPS Antenna is properly and securely mounted we can start with making our connections, first plug the BLUE GPS connector into the matching blue connector on the top left of the Sync 3 APIM, be warned its internally notched so you might have to rotate it a bit before it will seat with a click. Once that's done we can take our black mini USB connector and plug it into the bottom right black shrouded connector. After mating those two halves we can turn to the main module harness, line it up the best you can and push it in, the swing mechanism should already partially start twisting/setting itself, help it the rest of the way and in one smooth motion and with a click you should get the main wire harness plugged in.





## Step 11

Now that all our connections have been made we can tilt our APIM backwards into its home, taking care to line up the alignment pegs on the back of our earlier transferred brackets once it is all lined up, locate your once removed 7mm's and install the four of them in their respective places again.

If your kit came with a screen protector or you ordered one yourself, install that now, use a sticker with the screen protector along with the big pull tab sticker to get any lint on the screen, give it a gentle blow, if you have a sunroof it really helps with lighting up the display itself so you can center it and seeing any microparticles of dust laying on the screen, once you line it up, set it and admire (or scour, sorry if it got fucked up) at your work.



## Step 12

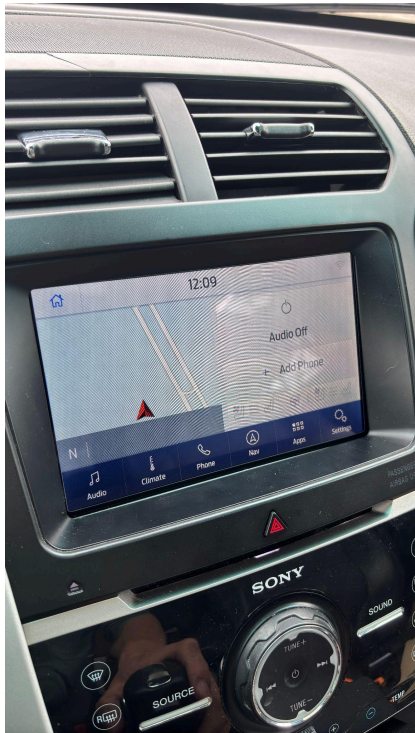
Now we can continue our buttoning up by re-locating our HVAC panel we set aside, find the control wire that's set aside and poking through the notch earlier, and connect it, once you verify it's clipped in, you can start by generally lining up the bezel to the opening in the dash, gently line up the top two clips but don't push them in yet, just make sure they are lined up, begin to gently snap in the clips up and down the side, once the panel is evenly seated on the sides, with gentle and even pressure using your fingers, seat the top two main clips. Once done you can screw in the four remaining 7mm screws. In order to get the winglet trim pieces back in, start by aligning the lower hook part of the trim indicated in the (blue arrow) first and align it, then align the main large ribbed clip (yellow arrow/circle) and press that in slightly, once you verify the two main metal clips (red circle) are aligned give everything a firm shove up and down the edges (green arrows) and it should nicely snap in. once your trim is buttoned up you also might notice the screen protector (if applied) looks a bit off center, you might go "awww fuck" like I did, but don't fret, the screen itself is offset in the opening and once the screen itself is ON the screen protector isn't as noticeable.



## Step 13

Now that you have everything buttoned together we can take a step back and admire our work... do a celebratory cart rip/smoke/self high five/whatever it is that you do and lets keep going, now take your key and turn the car to the ON position, or if you have a push to start push the button twice without pressing the brake pedal until all the warning lights on the cluster illuminate (this is fine), you will see a much nicer to look at higher resolution ford logo... after a few seconds you will see the much more satisfying 3 piece transition onto the Sync 3 Home screen. Nice. Now if you have a nav equipped model for a bit your car will think it's in Dearborn,MI.... (**God I wish!!!** There are so many questions I have for Ford's engineering and cost cutting team!!!!) but moving on, the screen will be a smidge bit stuttery on the first 20-ish minutes of startup as its initializing everything, calibrating its HVAC stuff and kinda marrying itself to the car in a room of which there are no others, its gonna ask you a few data and telemetry related questions, Such as If I wanted to send my music habits (?) and "diagnostic" data to ford, I personally opted out of everything except the 911 assist, because it is nobody's business but mine what I do in and what with my car lol, once Ford is done begging for your data to sell we can pull up those pictures we took earlier and make sure all your HVAC settings are there, go into settings and make sure your Audio and Ambient lighting settings are there as well, and once you verify all your settings are there like they are supposed to be, then we can move onto the final sub-step of this final step (sorry)





## Step 13a

Last and Final Optional step, connect your phone via your preferred method, more than likely if you are doing this upgrade; Its because you wanted the phone projection so your going to connect your phone with a cable (or begin the setup of your wireless adapter using the included instructions), and wait for Apple Carplay or Android Auto to launch, go through each of the menus, turn up the volume, make sure all the audio is playing from each of your speakers, (fwiw I noticed my subwoofer does not scale back as much at high volume like it used to on Sync 2) and enjoy your new Phone Projection in your Ford!

