

Glock Generation 3 to 4 Changes

Steve Koski 7/5/2010

The Glock generation 4 pistols have a handful of changes. These are my impressions based on side-by-side shooting, fondling, and tearing down a Gen 3 and Gen 4 Glock 17 9mm pistols.

Shooting & handling:

- The G4 has less perceived sharpness when the slide bottoms out against the frame at full recoil. Muzzle rise seemed the same. I shot a speed drill five times with each gun and couldn't pick a winner.
- When handling the G3 and a naked G4 side by side, the smaller G4 grip frame feels nicer than the G3. Adding the medium back strap to the G4 presumably makes it the size of a G3 grip, but it actually feels a little bigger. Measurements confirmed this. Putting the large back strap on the G4 makes it feel obnoxiously big. What grip shoots best? It's probably up to the shooter, and what they're used to.
- It is noticeably harder to work the slide on the G4 due to a stronger recoil spring. Not an issue for me, but this could be an issue for young folks or women.
- The G4 magazine release button is bigger, but I still have to shift my medium/large hand to press it. No benefit to me. The mag release button can also be switched to the right side of the gun. Thankfully I'm right handed unlike the geniuses in society.

G3 (olive drab) and naked G4 (black)



G3 and G4 with M backstrap



G3 and G4 with L backstrap



Cross Dressing:

- The G3 complete upper (slide, barrel, recoil spring) fit in the G4 frame and fired fine this way. G4 uppers won't fit on G3 frames.
- The trigger bars are different, but worked fine when swapped.
- The barrels are different, but worked fine when swapped.

Unchanged Parts (or barely changed):

- Frame:
 - Locking block, locking block pin
 - Slide lock, spring
 - Slide stop lever
 - Magazine catch spring
 - Connector
 - Trigger spring
 - Ejector
 - Trigger pin

- Slide
 - Firing pin, spring, cups, liner, spacer
 - Firing pin safety
 - Extractor (marked differently), plunger, spring, bearing
 - Sights
 - Slide cover plate (marked differently)
- Magazine
 - All magazine parts except for the tube

Frame Exterior:

- G4 is textured differently, with rows of small truncated pyramids.
- G4 grip lacks the semi-circle cut out below the pinky for mag extraction.
- G4 has “Patent Pending” on right of grip instead of listing patent numbers.
- G4 has MBS above trigger guard on right side, which apparently stands for modular back strap system, not Milton Bradley Systems.
- G4 mag catch button is much larger and is reversible.
- Different ribs on front of trigger guard.
- G4 has a smooth square on the bottom of trigger guard.
- G4 frame has light molding seams around thumb depressions and in several other locations. Not major, but not as refined as the G3 surface.

Bigger mag catch button



Bigger mag catch hole in frame



Patents



Patent pending



Front cutout gone



Smooth square on trigger guard



MBS = Modular Back Strap



Trigger guard front serrations



G3 frame surface



G4 frame surface



Small seams visible on G4



Frame Interior:

- The G4 dust cover interior is bigger, to make room for the larger recoil assembly. The space between the front slide rails is also bigger, less plastic.
- The G4 cutout for the mag catch spring is v shape instead of r shape of the G3, to make it reversible.
- The G4 hole for the trigger is larger.
- The G4 skips the 5 stamped on the shelf right of the trigger bar.

Wider, deeper G4 dust cover





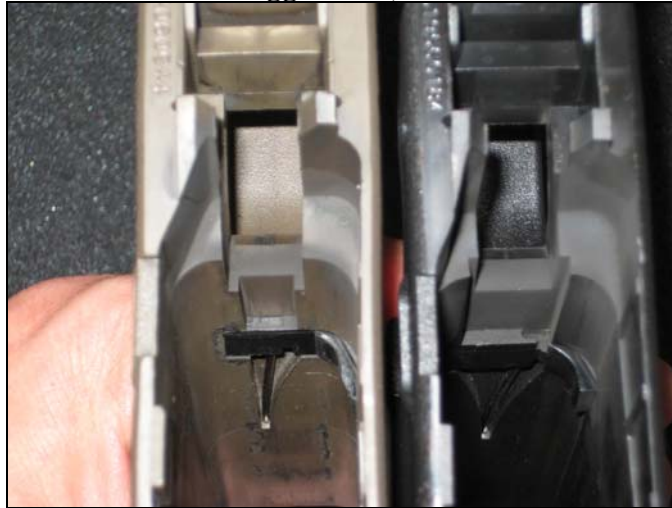
r shaped G3 mag catch spring notch



v shaped G4 mag catch spring notch



G4 bigger hole, no "5"



Slide:

- The front end of the G4 slide has a larger hole to accommodate the new recoil assembly.
- G4 has smaller relief machining for the front sight screw
- Different machining profile at front of slide rails
- More tracking numbers in different location on bottom of G4 slide.
- G4 has a step in the machining by the cartridge pickup rail, opposite the plunger, adjacent to breech face.
- "Gen 4" marked on slide.
- Dot pattern on slide under rear sideplate.

Front view



Slides only front view, G4 on right



“Gen 4” on slide



Different machining profiles, G4 on right



Slide interior, G4 on right



New dot pattern



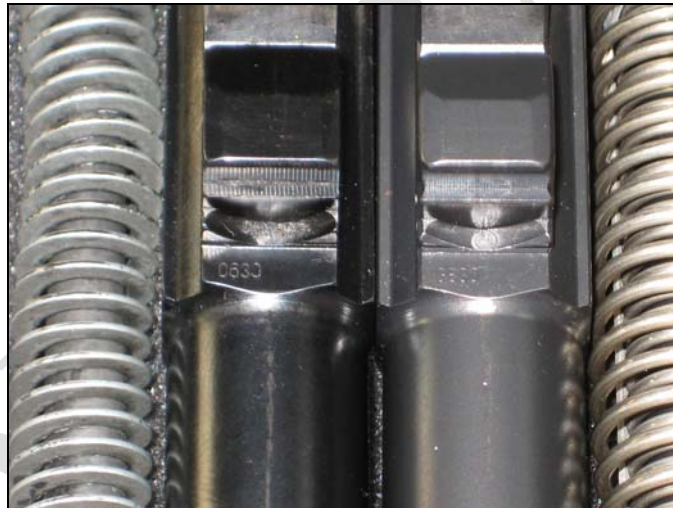
Barrel:

- G4 has a larger radius at the notch where the recoil assembly sits when putting the gun together.
- The G4 adds a dot to the center of the hexagon on the chamber.
- Different numbers in front of recoil assembly notch.

G3 on left - smaller radius notch, G4 - larger radius notch



Different numbers



G3 - no dot in pentagon



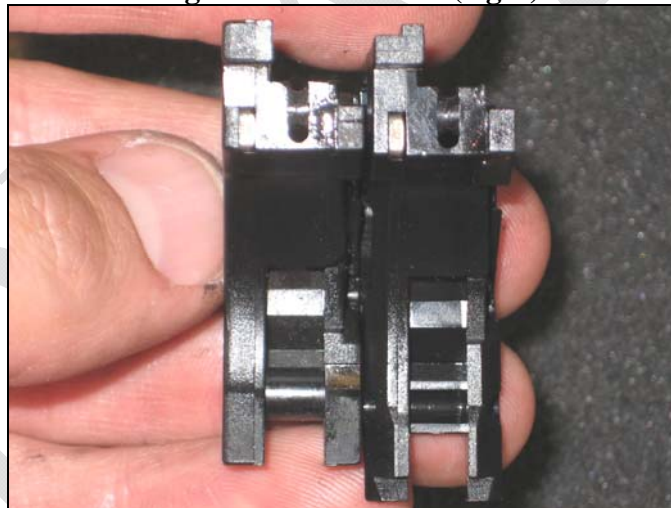
G4 – dot in pentagon



Trigger Mechanism Housing:

- G4 trigger housing has more taper, and has “legs” at the bottom to keep it from fitting in a G3 frame. Not cross compatible at all.
- Only part of the top plastic rail raised on the G4, the left half and front are shorter.

Legs on bottom of G4 (right)



More taper on G4



Trigger Bar:

- Trigger proper is unchanged.
- The leg that depresses the firing pin safety has a bump on the right side, which presumably rides along the inside of the slide, and the leg is offset less to the left.
- The G4 has two squares are stamped into the top of the cruciform instead of one.
- The rear leg of the cruciform has sharper bend, a kink, and a groove at the tip. It appears to give the same final location for the trigger spring.

G4 with bump & kink on top



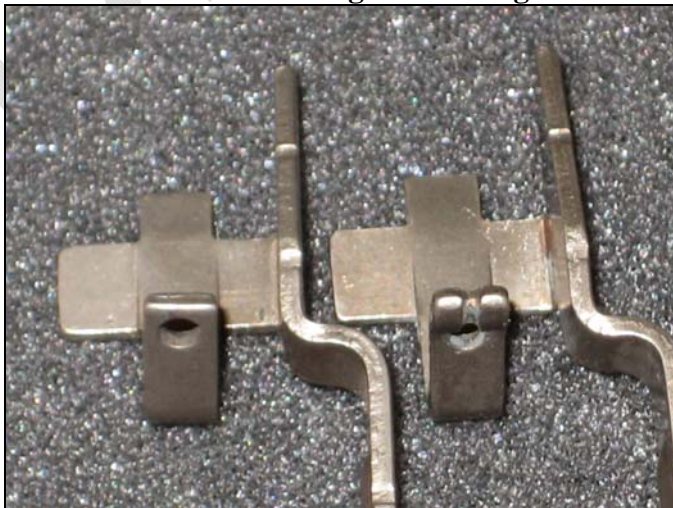
G4 on right, less offset



G4 with bump on top



G4 with kink & groove on right



Recoil Spring Assembly:

- G4 recoil assembly is a one piece unit that the user can't take apart. It has a full length inner round wire spring, a plastic guide rod with an integral front tip. The metal rear of the guide rod is riveted into the plastic section.
- A $\frac{3}{4}$ length metal sleeve sits over the inner spring and acts as a guide rod to the outer spring. The front of the inner spring presses against the inside of the sleeve.
- The outer spring is another round wire spring, and the front sits against the slide when in use.
- When the slide is retracted, initially just the outer spring compresses for the first $\frac{1}{4}$ " or so of travel, then the inner spring begins compressing.
- The sleeve is a single stamped piece of metal.

G4 on top



Trigger Housing Pins:

- The G4 comes with a short and a long trigger housing pin. Use the short one "naked" without the M or the L back straps. Use the long pin with the back strap pieces.
- You get a trigger housing pin pusher tool with your G4 Glock.
- The G3 has a medium length trigger housing pin.

Inside of M (left) and L back straps



Outside, medium length pin is from G3



Magazine:

- The G4 mag tube has an extra notch, which engages the magazine catch if you reverse it. The mag catch can be reversed in a minute or so with a screw driver and needle nosed pliers.
- G3 mags work fine in a G4 if you keep the mag catch button on the left side, but not if you reverse it.

Gen 4 mag (right) has extra notch on side



Other:

- The G4 is a bit less smooth to field strip and assemble. Maybe it's just new, or maybe the bump on the trigger bar pushes the slide out of alignment slightly.
- The G4 owner's manual (per Glock fashion) is about 5 years behind. No pictures or references to the G4 at all. You do get an instruction sheet that explains how to change back straps and which pins to use.