This month’s tech article identifies all of the steering linkage parts for 1955-1964 passenger cars, both standard and power. This article will help those of you who want to change from standard to power steering and vice versa. Currently, the most common conversions being made are by the 1958-1964 members who are changing over to Late Great Chevys “605” late model power steering. They want to know what steering linkage parts they will need in the conversion. Also there are many cars being built from boxes of parts that they buy as a “complete car” and many times some of the correct steering parts are not in the trailer full of parts that go along with the purchase.

The article will be divided into six sections with photos identifying the parts required to have an original steering set-up. At the end of the article, I will explain what items are required to convert to “605” power steering.

The basic parts to be discussed in this article will be the pitman arm (connects to the steering box), the drag link, also called the center link (the tie rod ends connect to the center link), and the idler arm (connects to the passenger-side frame rail and the drag link). The GM parts catalog refers to the pitman arm as “arm” in Group 6.859, refers to the drag link as “rod assembly” in Group 6.870, and the idler arm as “lever assembly” in Group 6.895. In a few cases a casting number is given, but it is the exception.

**1955-1957 Standard Steering**

The complete set-up is pictured in Photo #1.

A. pitman arm - cast #3709877 (1955-1956) & #3719487 (1957) (See Photo #2.) Even though there are two, physically and functionally, they are the same and will work for any 1955-1957. Notice that the ball stud is an integral part of the pitman arm.

B. drag link (center link) - part #3713921 (See the upper part in Photo #3.)

C. idler arm - cast #3709426 (See Photo #4 & the lower arm in Photo #9.)

(The standard steering idler arm looks like the power steering idler arm, but it is different. The part that bolts to the frame is the same, but the power steering arm is about 5/8-inch longer.)

Not one of these parts can be used in a power steering set-up.

**1955-1957 Power Steering**

The complete set-up is pictured in Photo #5.

A. pitman arm - cast #3709453 (See Photo #6.)

B. drag link (center link) - part #3710561 (See the lower part in Photo #3.)

The hydraulic cylinder connects to the bracket on the drag link. (See the upper part in Photo #7.) The control valve screws onto the end of the draglink. (See Photo #8.)

C. idler arm - cast #3707745 (See the upper arm in Photo #9.) (The power steering idler arm looks like the standard steering idler arm, but it is different. The part that bolts to the frame is the same, but the power steering arm is about 5/8-inch longer.)

Not one of these parts can be used in a standard steering set-up.
1958-1962 Standard Steering

The complete set-up is pictured in Photo #10.
A. pitman arm - cast #3741383 (See Photo #11.) (This pitman arm is also the correct pitman arm for all 1958-1964 power steering set-ups.)
B. drag link (center link) - part #3750827 (See the upper part in Photo #12.)
C. idler arm - cast #3744789 (1958-1960) (See the part to the left in Photo #13.), & #3820387/#3779185 (1961-1962) (See the part to the right in Photo #13.) These two idler arms are physically different, but functionally they are the same. In fact, the idler arms for standard steering are the same as the idler arms for power steering. All of the 1958-1964 idler arms are functionally interchangeable. (There is a spacer that goes between the frame and the idler arm bracket.)

As you can see, the pitman arm and the idler arm have more than one application.

1963-1964 Standard Steering

The complete set-up is pictured in Photo #14.
A. pitman arm - cast #3820407 (See Photo #15.)
B. drag link (center link) - part #3826479 (See the lower part in Photo #12.)
C. idler arm - cast either as #3820387 or #3779185 (1963-1964) (See the part to the right in Photo #13.) There is a spacer that goes between the frame and the idler arm bracket. In fact, the idler arms for standard steering are the same as the idler arms for power steering. All of the 1958-1964 idler arms are functionally interchangeable.

As you can see, the idler arm has more than one application.

1958-1960 Power Steering

The complete set-up is pictured in Photo #16.
A. pitman arm - cast #3741383 (See Photo #11.) This arm is also used on the 1963-1964 power steering set-ups and the 1958-1962 standard steering set-ups.
B. drag link (center link) - part #3740402 (See the part in the middle of Photo #12.) Even though this part # is different than the part # for the 1963-1964 power steering drag link, all 1958-1964 power steering center links are physically and functionally the same. The hydraulic cylinder connects to the drag link in a tapered hole. The control valve screws onto the end of the draglink. (See Photo #16A.)
C. idler arm - cast #3744789 (1958-1960) (See the part to the left in Photo #13.) In fact, the idler arms for standard steering are the same as the idler arms for power steering. All of the 1958-1964 idler arms are functionally interchangeable.

As you can see, the pitman arm and the idler arm have more than one application.
1961-1964 Power Steering

The complete set-up is pictured in Photo #17. The only thing different from the 1958-1960 power steering set-up is the idler arm.

A. pitman arm - cast #3741383 (See Photo #11.) This pitman arm is used on all 1958-1964 power steering set-ups and the 1958-1962 standard steering set-ups.

B. drag link (center link) - part #3740402 (See the part in the middle of Photo #12.) The control valve screws onto the end of the draglink. (See Photo #16A.) Even though this part # is different than the part # for the 1958-1962 power steering drag link, all 1958-1964 power steering center links are physically and functionally the same.

C. idler arm - cast either as #3820387 or #3779185 (1963-1964) (See the part on the right of Photo #13.) There is a spacer that goes between the frame and the idler arm bracket. These two castings look very similar and are functionally interchangeable. In fact, the idler arms for standard steering are the same as the idler arms for power steering. All of the 1958-1964 idler arms are functionally interchangeable. (There is a spacer that goes between the frame and the idler arm bracket.)

As you can see, the pitman arm has more than one application.

To convert to 1955-1957 "605" power steering

You need all three of the standard steering parts - pitman arm, drag link, and idler arm.

To convert to 1958-1964 "605" power steering

If you have standard steering, then you have the parts you need.

But if you have power steering, then depending on the year, the parts vary:

*If you have a 1958-1962 power steering set-up, then all you will need is a 1958-1962 standard steering drag. You will use your pitman arm and the idler arm.

*If you have 1963-1964 power steering, then you have two choices: the easiest would be to get a 1958-1962 standard steering drag link, that is all you need. But another choice would be to get a 1963-1964 standard steering drag link and 1963-1964 standard steering pitman arm.