1. Disconnect the battery.
2. Remove driver’s seat.
3. Remove the driver’s side center console panel (3 Phillips-head screws).
4. Remove the driver’s side kick panel (1 Phillips-head screw).
5. Remove small plastic dash closeout panel immediately under steering column (4 Phillips-head screws).
6. Disconnect vacuum lines from the backup headlight actuator switch that is mounted on the dash closeout panel just removed.
7. With a few differences as noted (and detailed in comments at the end of this section), the following are Jim Shea’s directions for dropping and removing the steering column which are found at this internet URL:


Jim Shea’s directions and the noted differences reference this factory assembly manual diagram of the steering column installation:

Steering Column Installation Detail
Brake Pedal Assembly Removal

Instructions for Dropping and Removing the Column (by Jim Shea)

[NOTE: Differences from Jim’s published procedure are inserted in bold italics. The differences are based on our experiences removing the steering column from our 78 Corvette test car.]

First of all, NEVER just remove the two vertical screws that hold the steering column up into the dash and let the column “hang” by the attachments at the flexible coupling and the two fasteners coming through the dash panel. Letting the column “hang” in that manner puts very high loads on the steering column lower bearing and can cause it to fail.

If your C3 has a steering column back drive system (all 1969 through 1976 models), you will need to open the hood and look directly under the brake booster. There will be a lever on the lower end of the steering column with a cable attached to it. Remove the cotter pin and washer, disconnect the back drive cable from the pin on the lever. There is also a metal lower column plate (M) attached to the dash panel. The cable sheath is attached to the plate. You can leave the cable attached to the plate. This plate also holds a welded stud and a loose carriage bolt (N) that secures the lower end of the column (J).

If you have a manual transmission, you will find a fairly heavy clutch pedal return spring attached to the plate and to the Z-bar. You should detach one end of the spring at this time. Hint! Detach the clutch pedal push rod from the Z-bar. This will allow the Z-bar to rotate rearward and take some tension off the spring.

Remove bolt “S” as shown in the steering column installation detail. This bolt must be completely removed from the flange or the steering column shaft will not slip out of the flange.¹

Note that the splined end of the steering shaft has a flat that, during reassembly, must be located and centered directly under where bolt “S” will be reinstalled. Reassembly is pretty much foolproof if you do not rotate the steering wheel in the removed steering column. Keep it centered so turn signal cancelling is not affected. For our test 78, the steering column locked so it could not move, but that may not be possible in 76 and earlier models.

Go back inside the car and remove the crossover bar (if equipped) and the air conditioning duct that passes under the steering column. Remove the two nuts (R) that attach the steering column to the outside lower column plate. Now go back under the hood and pull the plate away from the dash. You will also find that there are two washers (P) sandwiched between the plate and the dash panel.

Our 78 Corvette test car did not have the 2 (P) washers.

Now, go back inside and unfasten the two vertical screws (K) and washers (L) that hold the column up into the dash.

Make sure on 1976 and earlier columns that you have the back drive lever all the way in the Up position and that it is aligned with the cutout in the front of dash. Now pull the column straight back, slipping the splined steering shaft out of the steering coupler flange. (You may need an assistant out under the hood to help disengage the parts.) Pull back and rotate the steering column so that it will drop and the steering wheel will rest on the floor.²
Brake Pedal Assembly Removal

You can now disconnect the two body harness electrical connectors from the column ignition switch. There are three plastic tabs that need to be depressed in order to disengage them from the switch. Disconnect the turn signal “harmonica” electrical connector from the vehicle wiring. Disconnect the electrical connector(s) from the dimmer switch and the cruise control wires (if so equipped). The steering column can now be removed from the car.

[End of Jim Shea’s instructions for dropping and removing the steering column.]

8. Once the steering column is out, remove the speedometer-tachometer assembly (5 Phillips-head screws). It is not necessary to remove the clear plastic lens. Reach behind the speedometer and depress the speedometer cable locking spring while pulling the assembly toward you and the cable will be released from the assembly. There is 1 large electrical connector to the assembly which detaches easily.

9. Remove the steering column support flanges, items “C” and “A” in the steering column installation detail drawing.

10. Remove the electrical connector from the brake light switch (orange and white leads).

11. Remove the cruise control (if equipped) electrical connector from the brake light switch.

12. Remove the cruise control (if equipped) vacuum hose from the vacuum release valve immediately above the brake light switch.

13. Remove the pin connecting the brake actuator rod to the brake pedal shaft.
Brake Pedal Assembly Removal

14. This factory assembly drawing illustrates how the brake master cylinder/brake booster is mounted to the brake pedal housing cover.

15. Remove the brake master cylinder from the power brake booster can. **IMPORTANT:** Although the master cylinder can swing forward sufficiently to allow removal of the power brake booster can from the car without disconnecting the brake lines from the master cylinder, the master cylinder **MUST** be supported from above to prevent damage to brake fluid lines. This photo shows one way it can be done.
Brake Pedal Assembly Removal

16. Back inside the car, there are four 9/16 inch self-locking nuts at the extreme forward end of the brake pedal assembly bracket. These nuts mate to long studs extending toward the rear of the car from the power brake booster can through the firewall and the brake pedal assembly bracket. Removal of these nuts requires a deep-well socket, a universal joint, and at least 16 inches of socket wrench extension(s). The upper-left nut in particular is very difficult to see and remove, but with patience and persistence, it can be done.

17. After removing the four nuts, carefully move the power brake booster can forward just enough that the studs clear the brake pedal housing cover and wiggle the can free of the car. The oil dipstick (not the dipstick tube) may have to be removed to eliminate interference.

18. The rear of the brake pedal assembly bracket is secured by four ¼ inch bolts (item 2 in the assembly drawing below) through the brake pedal housing cover. These bolts are accessed from the front of the windshield wiper trough. After removing the bolts, carefully remove the brake pedal assembly from under the dash.

Comments on differences to Jim Shea’s instructions for dropping and removing the steering column as noted in this procedure:

1. As published, Jim’s procedure calls for removing nuts (G) and lockwashers (H) that connect the flexible coupling (rag joint) to the steering column flange (F). We tried this on our test 78, but the flange (F) would not fit through the dash panel opening.

2. Jim’s procedure says, “Before dropping the steering column it is best to first remove the steering wheel since the column will not drop very far when the steering wheel hits the car seat.” We removed the seat so it would be easier to work in the brake pedal area. Thus we had plenty of room and steering wheel removal was not necessary.