

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1962 Ford Thunderbird Restoration Guide

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1962 Ford Thunderbird Restoration Guide

Model Years 1962

Model year	1962
Generation	Bullet Bird (third generation)
Engine	390 cu in FE V8
Output	300 hp (M-code tri-power: 340 hp)
Transmission	Cruise-O-Matic automatic (3-speed)
Production	Within a 214,000-car Bullet Bird generation total

Every specification in this guide was checked against factory literature, marque references, period road tests, and documented survivor vehicles. Where sources disagree or the record is silent, this guide says so rather than guessing.

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How This Guide Works

This is a **single-year restoration** guide for the 1962 Ford Thunderbird - one model year, given its own guide because the year changes are the restoration: specifications, finishes and procedures that differ from the year before and the year after are called out in the 1962 Register below, and shared platform material is labeled as shared. Ford factory shop manuals 1958-1966; Vintage Thunderbird Club marque references; period road tests; Motor Trend Car of the Year record.

Scope. This guide covers the 1962 Ford Thunderbird as built. Neighboring years appear only where a change boundary must be drawn - a part or procedure belonging to another year is named as such, never silently applied to this one.

Platform Snapshot

Fact	Detail
Model year	1962
Engine (standard)	390 cu in FE V8
Output	300 hp (M-code tri-power: 340 hp)
Transmission	Cruise-O-Matic automatic (3-speed)
Chassis	Unibody; 113 in wheelbase
Original list price	Sports Roadster package a high-price option
Production	Within a 214,000-car Bullet Bird generation total

The 1962 Register - What Makes a 1962 a 1962

- The Landau arrives: a vinyl-roofed hardtop with simulated S-bars on the rear pillars - the formal Thunderbird formula that runs for decades starts here.
- The Sports Roadster package answers the two-seat nostalgia: a fiberglass tonneau cover over the rear seat, 48-spoke Kelsey-Hayes wire wheels and roadster presentation. It sold slowly - price and tonneau complexity - which is why genuine Sports Roadsters are documented cars, not trim claims.
- The M-code engine debuts: a 340-hp 390 with three two-barrel Holley carburetors. The tri-power induction is a factory 1962 system with its own linkage and air cleaner arrangement.
- Grille pattern for 1962 is the 'squares' design (1961: horizontal bars; 1963: vertical bars) - the grille alone separates the three Bullet years at the front.

Engines - the 1962 Specification

Engine	Output	Notes
390 FE V8	300 hp	Standard; single four-barrel
390 FE V8 M-code, tri-power	340 hp	Optional; three two-barrel Holley carburetors

M-code authentication is paperwork plus hardware: the engine code, the tri-power manifold and linkage as a set. A four-barrel car with an aftermarket tri-power is a modified car, not an M-code.

Tri-power setup is progressive-linkage setup: center carburetor as the primary, outers phased to the 1962 manual.



Year-Correct Procedures

Sports Roadster tonneau fit and its rear-seat coverage are package-specific service items; the wire wheels take spoke-wheel service discipline, not steel-wheel habits.

Landau vinyl roof care and S-bar retention are 1962-new trim service items.

Finishes and Trim - 1962 Only

- 1962 rear-fender ornamentation: the triple bars on the rear wings are this year's marker (1963 moves smaller bars onto the door panels).
- Landau: vinyl roof with S-bar pillar ornaments - the trim that defines the model; a painted-roof 'Landau' is missing its defining finish.

Restoration Sequence Notes

- Photograph and record the car's tags, casting numbers and as-found trim before teardown - on a single-year restoration the as-found evidence is what the finished car is judged against.
- Verify every year-locked item in the 1962 Register before ordering parts; the commonest defect in this model's restorations is a neighboring year's part fitted without malice and without record.
- Keep a build file: sources consulted, measurements taken, and every substitution made, however small.

Recommended for this restoration

Shop exact-fit supplies on Amazon

- Ford FE 352 390 428 engine rebuild gasket set
- 1958-1966 Ford Thunderbird weatherstrip kit
- Ford Thunderbird sequential turn signal sequencer

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Sources Consulted

Ford factory shop manuals 1958-1966; Vintage Thunderbird Club marque references; period road tests; Motor Trend Car of the Year record. Where sources disagreed, the disagreement is recorded in this guide's corrections file and the disputed figure is not asserted.

Thank you for restoring a 1962 Ford Thunderbird the way it was built - one year at a time. - RestorationEssentials