

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1966 Ford Bronco Restoration Guide

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RESTORATION ESSENTIALS

1966 Ford Bronco

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

RestorationEssentials single-year guide · Model year 1966 only · Early Bronco (first generation), 92-inch wheelbase

KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

- **Model year covered:** 1966 only. This guide does not cover other years except where differences from 1966 are explicitly noted.
- **Body styles (1966):** U13 Roadster, U14 Sports Utility (half-cab pickup), U15 Wagon — all three offered.
- **Engines (1966):** 170 cu in inline six (F) — 105 hp (SAE gross) at 4,400 rpm; 289 cu in V8 (N) — 200 hp (SAE gross).
- **Transmission (1966):** 3-speed manual, column shift, fully synchronized (the first fully synchronized transmission in a U.S. 4x4). No automatic. Dana 20 transfer case, T-bar shifter with positive-lock button knob.
- **Front axle / brakes (1966):** Dana 30; Drums all around: 11-inch front, 10-inch rear.
- **Production (1966):** 23,776 total — 4,090 roadsters, 6,930 sports utilities, 12,756 wagons (Consumer Guide production record; Ford Archives roadster figure agrees).

1. Manufacturer history: Ford

Ford Motor Company was incorporated on June 16, 1903. By the mid-1960s Ford had deep four-wheel-drive experience — it had built more than 270,000 Jeeps during World War II and designed the M151 MUTT in 1951 — but no civilian off-roader of its own. Product manager Donald Frey and Lee Iacocca saw Jeep's CJ-5 and International Harvester's Scout selling strongly and wanted a share of that market.

The Bronco, introduced in August 1965 as a 1966 model, was Ford's answer: a purpose-built short-wheelbase (92-inch) 4x4 on its own box-section frame, shared with no other Ford line, with coil-sprung Mono-Beam front suspension, radius arms, and a track bar — a more civilized machine than the CJ, with roll-up windows, a padded dash, and a fully synchronized three-speed. It ran twelve model years essentially unchanged in outline, evolving by accumulation — safety equipment, a stronger front axle, an automatic, power steering, disc brakes — before the full-size F-Series-based Bronco replaced it for 1978.

2. Model history: the early Bronco, and where 1966 sits

The first-generation Bronco ran 1966–1977 on its own chassis: U13 Roadster, U14 half-cab Pickup, and U15 Wagon at launch; the Roadster ended after 1968, the Pickup after 1972, and the Wagon carried the line alone to 1977. The changes that matter, in order: safety equipment and the Sport package (1967), federal markers and the end of the 289 and the Roadster (1968), the 302 and a strengthened body (1969), Sport as a trim level (1970), the Dana 44 front axle and the Stroppe Baja Bronco (1971), net ratings, the J-pattern shifter, and the Ranger package (1972), the 200 six, the C4 automatic, and power steering (1973), detail-only changes (1974), the V8-only range (1975), front disc brakes and quicker steering (1976), and the final-year revisions (1977). This guide covers 1966 only; the year-change register in Section 3 states exactly what 1966 changed, what it kept, and what it ended.

3. What is unique about the 1966 Bronco

- Launch year, introduced August 1965. The only year a Bronco could be six-cylinder only at the start of production — the 289 V8 arrived in March 1966, so a very early 1966 is always a 170 six truck.
- All three body styles debut: U13 Roadster (open body, door inserts, fold-down windshield, no roof or doors as built), U14 Sports Utility (half-cab with steel bulkhead behind the seat), U15 Wagon (full steel top, the volume seller from day one).
- The first approximately 200 bodies were built by the Budd Company, and early production carries the scalloped ('eyebrow') grille — the details collectors check first on a 1966 (range-guide / marque-reference detail).
- Vacuum-operated windshield wipers and a fold-down windshield are standard Bronco equipment this year.
- Full-width 56-inch tailgate with a center latch for one-handed operation — a genuine Bronco advantage over the Jeep's chain-held gate.
- Free-running front hubs, heater/defroster, and padded sun visors are options, not standard equipment, on a 1966.

Year-change register — 1966 vs. the year before:

- First year of the model — everything is new: dedicated 92-inch-wheelbase chassis, Mono-Beam coil-spring front suspension, Dana 20 transfer case, Dana 30 front axle, Ford 9-inch rear axle.
- 289 V8 joins mid-year (March 1966) as the only engine option.

4. Technical restoration data — 1966 Ford Bronco

4.1 Specification table (1966)

Item	1966 specification
Body styles	U13 Roadster, U14 Sports Utility (half-cab pickup), U15 Wagon — all three offered
Transmission / transfer case	3-speed manual, column shift, fully synchronized (the first fully synchronized transmission in a U.S. 4x4). No automatic. Dana 20 transfer case, T-bar shifter with positive-lock button knob.
Front axle	Dana 30
Rear axle	Ford 9-inch
Brakes	Drums all around: 11-inch front, 10-inch rear
Steering	Manual steering only
Production	23,776 total — 4,090 roadsters, 6,930 sports utilities, 12,756 wagons (Consumer Guide production record; Ford Archives roadster figure agrees)
Prices	Roadster \$2,404; Sports Utility \$2,480; Wagon \$2,625 (Consumer Guide). An earlier RE range guide quoted a \$2,194 base — see the corrections file; do not mix the two price sets.
Colors	Published color counts conflict (Hagerty: 10 colors; Consumer Guide: five exterior colors) — restore from a 1966 Ford paint chart and the warranty-plate paint code, not a count.

Engines (1966):

Engine	Rating	Notes
170 cu in inline six (F)	105 hp (SAE gross) at 4,400 rpm	Standard engine. Solid-lifter Falcon-derived six modified for the Bronco: different single-barrel carburetor, heavy-duty fuel pump, 6-quart oil pan, oil-bath air cleaner, tilt-compensated carburetor float bowl.
289 cu in V8 (N)	200 hp (SAE gross)	Optional from March 1966. The launch brochure promised it for mid-March; early trucks are six-cylinder only.

4.2 VIN and warranty-plate decoding

The VIN is carried on the warranty plate on the inner face of the glovebox door, and the same number is stamped on top of the right frame rail near the passenger footwell / body mount. The two must match; the frame stamp governs when they disagree. The warranty plate also carries paint, trim, axle, transmission, and DSO codes — decode the plate, then verify the axle ratio against the tag on the axle housing, because gears are the most commonly changed item on these trucks.

Code	Meaning
U13	Roadster (1966–1968 only)
U14	Half-cab Pickup (called Sports Utility in 1966)