

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1966 Ford Thunderbird Restoration Guide

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1966 Ford Thunderbird Restoration Guide

Model Years 1966

Model year	1966
Generation	Flair Bird (fourth generation)
Engine	390 cu in FE V8 (428 FE optional)
Output	315 hp (428: 345 hp)
Transmission	Cruise-O-Matic automatic (3-speed)
Production	More than 69,000 (final Flair Bird year)

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 1966 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 1966 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 1966 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	1966
Engine (standard)	390 cu in FE V8 (428 FE optional)
Output	315 hp (428: 345 hp)
Transmission	Cruise-O-Matic automatic (3-speed)
Chassis	Unibody; 113.2 in wheelbase; front disc brakes
Original list price	Final year of the span; last convertible until 2002
Production	More than 69,000 (final Flair Bird year)

The 1966 Register - What Makes a 1966 a 1966

- Final Flair Bird year and the end of this guide span: a new eggcrate grille and single-blade front bumper at the front, and a restyled rear bumper carrying new FULL-WIDTH taillamps at the back.
- The standard 390 is re-rated to 315 hp, and a new top option joins: the 428 cu in FE at 345 hp - the first big-block option since the 430 MEL left after 1960.
- Last convertible Thunderbird until the 2002 retro cars - every 1966 convertible is the end of a 1955-1966 open-car line.
- The Landau's enlarged C-pillars (no rear quarter windows) give the most formal roof of the span.
- The 1967 car that follows is a different machine (body-on-frame returns, a four-door joins) - nothing in this guide should be carried past 1966.

Engines - the 1966 Specification

Engine	Output	Notes
390 FE V8	315 hp	Standard; re-rated for 1966; single four-barrel
428 FE V8	345 hp	Optional; new top power option for 1966

The 428 is an FE - same family as the 390, different displacement and specification tables. A 428 claim decodes from the car's engine code, not from a badge.



The 390's 315-hp rating is a 1966 figure; carrying the 1961-65 300-hp number onto a 1966 build sheet understates the car.

Year-Correct Procedures

Full-width taillamp and restyled rear bumper service are 1966 arrangements - lamp and bumper parts do not interchange with 1964-65.

Sequential signals and front discs carry over from 1965 practice; the systems are mature by 1966 and the manuals treat them as standard equipment.

Finishes and Trim - 1966 Only

- Eggcrate grille, single-blade bumper and full-width taillamps: the three 1966 tells, front and rear.
- The 1965 fender waste-gate trim is deleted for 1966 - its presence on a '1966' fender dates the panel, not the car.

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 1966 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 1966 Ford Thunderbird the way it was built - one year at a time. - RestorationEssentials