

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1968 Ford Bronco Restoration Guide

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RESTORATION ESSENTIALS

1968 Ford Bronco

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

RestorationEssentials single-year guide · Model year 1968 only · Early Bronco (first generation), 92-inch wheelbase

KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

- **Model year covered:** 1968 only. This guide does not cover other years except where differences from 1968 are explicitly noted.
- **Body styles (1968):** U13 Roadster (final year), U14 Pickup, U15 Wagon.
- **Engines (1968):** 170 cu in inline six (F) — Gross rating — see 1967 note; 289 cu in V8 (N) — 200 hp (SAE gross); 240 cu in inline six (A) — Rating not printed.
- **Transmission (1968):** 3-speed manual, column shift. No automatic. Dana 20, T-bar shifter — the lock button on the T-handle returns this year.
- **Front axle / brakes (1968):** Dana 30; Drums all around, self-adjusting, dual-reservoir master cylinder.
- **Production (1968):** 16,629 total (range-guide figure from Fesler / period literature). Hagerty cites 15,700 sold — see the corrections file. Roadsters: 212 (Ford Archives) — the rarest regular-production early Bronco..

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 1968 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 1968 only; the year-change register in Section 3 states exactly what 1968 changed, what it kept, and what it ended.

3. What is unique about the 1968 Bronco

- Final year of the U13 Roadster — 212 built. Roadster production across 1966–68 totaled exactly 5,000 (Ford Archives), which is why a claimed 1968 roadster demands full VIN and frame-stamp verification.
- Final year of the 289 V8. The 302 does NOT replace it until the 1969 model year (Hagerty, Consumer Guide, and Wikipedia agree) — a '1968 302 Bronco' is an engine swap, however it is presented. (The earlier RE range guide's '302 joins during 1968' line is corrected here — see the corrections file.)
- Federal safety equipment arrives: side marker lights on the lower front fenders with amber lenses, and reflectors on the rear quarters.
- A dry-element (replaceable) air filter replaces the oil-bath unit — an underhood tell for the year.
- Free-running (locking) front hubs become standard equipment.
- Interior door handles change from pull-up style to a recessed flipper type; front bumpers gain curved ends; a swing-away outside spare-tire carrier joins the options; heater and defroster become standard; kingpins are upgraded.
- Late in the model run, electric windshield wipers begin replacing the vacuum units as a running change (Hagerty places the switch after mid-1968 production; Consumer Guide describes it as a running change completed across the 1969 model year) — a late 1968 can legitimately carry either system; document what the truck has.

Year-change register — 1968 vs. the year before:

- **LAST YEAR:** U13 Roadster; 289 V8; oil-bath air cleaner; pull-up door handles.
- **NEW:** side marker lights and rear reflectors; dry-element air filter; standard locking hubs; recessed flipper door handles; curved-end front bumper; swing-away spare carrier (option); standard heater/defroster; upgraded kingpins; T-handle lock button returns.

- **RUNNING CHANGE:** vacuum → electric wipers begins late in the year.

4. Technical restoration data — 1968 Ford Bronco

4.1 Specification table (1968)

Item	1968 specification
Body styles	U13 Roadster (final year), U14 Pickup, U15 Wagon
Transmission / transfer case	3-speed manual, column shift. No automatic. Dana 20, T-bar shifter — the lock button on the T-handle returns this year.
Front axle	Dana 30
Rear axle	Ford 9-inch
Brakes	Drums all around, self-adjusting, dual-reservoir master cylinder
Steering	Manual steering only
Production	16,629 total (range-guide figure from Fesler / period literature). Hagerty cites 15,700 sold — see the corrections file. Roadsters: 212 (Ford Archives) — the rarest regular-production early Bronco.
Prices	Not printed — see the corrections file.
Colors	13 colors (Hagerty).

Engines (1968):

Engine	Rating	Notes
170 cu in inline six (F)	Gross rating — see 1967 note	Standard engine.
289 cu in V8 (N)	200 hp (SAE gross)	FINAL year for the 289 in the Bronco.
240 cu in inline six (A)	Rating not printed	Rare factory listing in the Broncozone decode reference for 1968 only. Document any claimed 240 truck from its warranty plate and frame stamp before valuing it.

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)