

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1969 Buick Wildcat Restoration Guide

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1969 Buick Wildcat Restoration Guide

Model Years 1969

Model	Buick Wildcat — full-size performance series
Body / frame	124-in wheelbase — new body, shorter chassis
Engine	430 V8, 360 hp / 475 lb-ft — final 430 year
Transmission	Super Turbine 400 (Turbo Hydra-Matic 400) automatic; 3-speed manual standard on paper
Production	67,453
Identity	New LeSabre-shared body, loop bumper, fender gills retained

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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1. What this guide is — and is not

This is a single-year guide. It covers model year 1969 only. Where a neighbouring year differs, the difference is stated as a difference — the other year's parts, ratings and trim are never silently borrowed. Shared platform engineering is shared honestly; the specification table, the year-change register and the finishes in this guide are this year's own.

2. The year in brief

The 1969 Wildcat wears the last restyled body of the line: long swages trailing from the wheel arches, a bolder grille with vertical texturing, a squared chrome loop bumper and a more formal roofline — on a wheelbase that shrank back to 124 inches. The base car again shares LeSabre sheet metal, distinguished by its grille, a broad rocker moulding and the five vertical fender bars — the 'gills' — behind the front wheels that remained a Wildcat trademark.

The 430 serves its final year at the same 360 hp. Series coverage is base and Custom; period listings put base prices roughly between \$3,450 and \$3,600, with the Custom convertible at about \$3,950. Production totalled 67,453, roughly a tenth of Buick's year. Restorers should note the range guide's cover line — a blanket 126-inch wheelbase for 1965–70 — is wrong for this year: 1969–70 cars sit on 124 inches, and chassis and exhaust parts must be ordered accordingly.

3. Year-change register

Read this register before ordering anything. It is the difference between a 1969 car and a car that merely looks like one from across the street.

Item	1968	This year (1969)
Wheelbase	126 in	124 in
Body	1967–68 shell	New body: swages from the wheel arches, formal roofline, loop bumper
Grille	1968 pattern	Bolder grille, vertical texturing; fender gills retained
Engine	430, 360 hp	430, 360 hp (final year of the 430)
Base prices	—	About \$3,450–\$3,600; Custom convertible about \$3,950
Production	73,561 (1968)	67,453



4. Specification table — 1969

Item	Specification
Wheelbase	124 in
Engine	430 cu in V8, 360 hp @ 4,600 rpm, 475 lb-ft @ 3,200 rpm (gross)
Transmissions	3-speed manual (standard on paper); Turbo Hydra-Matic 400 optional — the overwhelming majority are automatic
Body styles	Base: sedan, hardtop sedan, hardtop coupe. Custom: hardtop coupe, hardtop sedan, convertible
Production	67,453 (13,126 base sedans; 12,416 base hardtop coupes; 2,375 Custom convertibles recorded)

5. Numbers, tags and identity

- The 124-inch wheelbase is the fastest identity check on a 1969 car — measure before decoding anything else.
- Body-plate decoding follows the established Buick pattern; Custom cars add vinyl or all-vinyl interiors and notchback front seats per period listings — verify against the trim code.
- A three-speed manual is listed as standard equipment in period references, but production reality is automatic; a manual 1969 Wildcat needs full documentation.

6. Engines and transmissions

- **430 V8.** Final year: 360 hp, 475 lb-ft, Rochester four-barrel, hydraulic lifters, five main bearings. Support is shared with 1967–68 — the same engine, the same rebuild discipline.
- Turbo Hydra-Matic 400 automatic in nearly every car built.
- Engine dating discipline matters more each year: a 1970 455 in a 1969 shell is a fine hot rod and a wrong restoration.

7. Paint, trim and finishes

The loop bumper and its squared chrome are 1969 signatures and expensive to restore well; the grille's vertical texture and the fender gills are the details judges look for. Custom side trim visually separates Custom from base this year — keep the two specifications apart when sourcing mouldings.

8. Rust and inspection map

New body, new seams: the 1969 shell's swage lines and formal roof change where water sits. Add the C-pillar and rear-window channel to the standard full-size inspection.

- Lower front fenders behind the wheel openings, and the fender 'gill' trim area on cars that carry it — trim traps moisture against the panel.
- Rocker panels, inner and outer, and the rear quarter panels ahead of and behind the rear wheels.
- Trunk floor, spare-tyre well and the trunk drop-offs at the quarter-panel seams.
- Floor pans at the seat-belt anchors and under the rear seat; check with the carpets lifted, not by tapping from below.