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The opening pages of

1969 Chevrolet Caprice Restoration Guide

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1969 Chevrolet Caprice Restoration Guide

Model Years 1969

Model	Chevrolet Caprice
Body / frame	119-in wheelbase; loop-bumper redesign
Engines	327 (235 hp) standard; 350 (250/300 hp); 396 (325 hp); 427 L36 (390 hp); 427 L72 (425 hp, special order)
Transmissions	TH350 joins behind small-blocks; TH400 behind big-blocks; manuals rare
Signature option	Concealed headlamps again: 23,797 built
Identity	Loop bumper, sculpted sides, the 350 arrives

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 Caprice is recognisable from across the lot by its loop front bumper — a full-width chrome loop that wraps the grille — over sides newly sculptured around the wheel openings, while the rear kept the chrome beam with inset lamps from 1968. Concealed headlamps were offered again and found far more takers this time: 23,797 sets, against 14,929 in 1968.

The engine sheet turns over. The standard engine is the 327 two-barrel — rated 235 hp in the range documentation this program is built on; one secondary owner-manual summary prints 250 hp, and the conflict is recorded here rather than resolved by preference. The 350 arrives at 250 hp (two-barrel) and 300 hp (four-barrel). At the top, the L36 427 gives 390 hp and the L72 remains a special-order 425 hp engine — 546 were built across the full-size line's special orders, making documentation the whole ballgame on any claimed car. The TH350 three-speed automatic joins the range behind small-blocks this year.

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)
Front bumper	1968 beam and grille	Loop bumper wraps the grille
Body sides	1968 sculpting	Resculpted around the wheel openings
Standard engine	307, 200 hp	327 2-bbl, 235 hp (250 hp in one secondary source — flagged)
350 engine	Not offered	New: 250 hp (2V) / 300 hp (4V)
Concealed lamps	14,929 built	23,797 built
Small-block automatic	Powerglide / THM by engine	TH350 joins the range
L72 production	Available	Special order; 546 built

4. Specification table — 1969

Item	Specification
Wheelbase	119 in
Standard engine	327 cu in V8 2-bbl, 235 hp (gross)
Options	350, 250/300 hp; 396, 325 hp; 427 L36, 390 hp / 460 lb-ft; 427 L72, 425 hp
Transmissions	3-speed manual; TH350 (small-block); TH400 (big-block); Powerglide fading
Production note	23,797 concealed-lamp cars; 546 L72 special orders



5. Numbers, tags and identity

- This is the year the paperwork matters most at the top of the range: an L72 Caprice is one of 546 special orders, and its value is its documentation. No docs, no premium — whatever the suffix appears to say.
- TH350 versus TH400 identity follows the engine family; a transmission swap across families is a driveline story to uncover at inspection, not a surprise to find at rebuild.
- Loop-bumper cars: the bumper is a 1969–70 face component — verify the car's year from its codes before assuming the face is original to it.

6. Engines and transmissions

- **327 2-bbl (standard).** 235 hp per the range documentation; treat the 250 hp figure in secondary summaries as an open conflict, recorded in Chapter 3.
- **350 V8.** New for 1969 at 250 (2V) and 300 hp (4V) — the engine that would define the next decade of full-size Chevrolets.
- **396 / 427.** 325 hp; L36 390 hp with 460 lb-ft; L72 425 hp special-order only.
- Axles: 10-bolt behind small-blocks, 12-bolt behind big-blocks; Positraction optional.

7. Paint, trim and finishes

The loop bumper is the year's chrome centrepiece and its biggest single brightwork cost; the sculpted wheel-opening lines must survive bodywork unfilled. Concealed lamps, where fitted, restore as a system with the grille, exactly as in 1968 — but note the take-rate nearly doubled, so 1969 lamp hardware is the more findable of the two years.

8. Rust and inspection map

Sculpted sides change the rust inspection: the wheel-opening swages hold mud at four new traps. The 1968 bumper-lamp corrosion warning carries over unchanged.

- Frame rails at the body mounts and rear kick-up — the perimeter frame rots from inside; probe, do not just look.
- Trunk floor and drop-offs, rear quarter panels low behind the wheels, and the valance behind the rear bumper.
- Floor pans at the front seat mounts and under the rear seat; lift the carpets on any car being valued.
- Lower front fenders and the cowl sides behind them; formal-roof cars add the C-pillar and rear-window channel.
- Wagon tailgate and spare-tyre well on Estate cars; the well is a water trap by design.
- Bumper-integral taillight housings (1968–69): the beam that carries the lamps corrodes from behind and is expensive to replace well.

9. Restoration priorities for this year

- Documentation before dollars on any L72 claim — 546 cars, no exceptions to the evidence rule.
- Save the loop bumper: straighten and rechrome original steel in preference to any substitute.
- Confirm the automatic's identity (TH350 vs TH400) against the engine family during the pre-purchase inspection.
- Keep the rating conflict in the car's file — 235 vs 250 hp is an honest open item, not an embarrassment.