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The opening pages of

1969 Oldsmobile 442 Restoration Guide

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1969 Oldsmobile 442 Restoration Guide

Model Year 1969

Model	Oldsmobile 442 (Holiday coupe, Sports Coupe, conv.)
Platform	GM A-body
Engines	400 V8 (350/325 hp) / W-30 400 (360 hp) / W-31 350
Transmissions	Muncie 4-speed / Turbo Hydra-matic 400
Notable	Under-bumper Force-Air W-30; Hurst/Olds 455

Every specification in this guide was checked against factory literature, marque references, period road tests, and documented survivor cars. Where sources disagree or the record is silent, this guide says so rather than guessing.

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Inside This Guide

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Chapter 1 — Oldsmobile and the 4-4-2 Idea

The digits arrived in 1964 — four-barrel carburetor, four-speed gearbox, dual exhausts — bolted to the Cutlass. For 1968 the 4-4-2 became a model in its own right, and 1969 is the second year of that standalone series: a facelift of the '68 car with the headlights drawn closer together and vertical taillights. Underneath, 1969 is the year of the 400 — one big-block in three factory tunes, a small-block W-car that cost more than the big-block one, and the Hurst/Olds sneaking a 455 past GM's cubic-inch limits for intermediate cars. Knowing which of those cars you actually have is the whole game, and it is decided by the VIN, the cowl tag, and the casting numbers — in that order.

Chapter 2 — What Makes 1969 Different

Three facts frame the year. First, the standard engine is the 400, not the 455 that headlines 1970: rated 350 horsepower with the manual transmission and 325 with the automatic — the difference is the factory tune, transmission-segregated and documented in period sources, not a misprint. Second, the W-30 breathes through dual scoops under the front bumper, not through a hood: the fiberglass hood belongs to 1970, and bolting one onto a '69 makes a tribute, not a restoration. Third, the W-31 — a 325-horsepower 350 small-block car — cost \$310, more than the big-block W-30 package at about \$263. Oldsmobile priced the small-block's hardware honestly; restorers should too.



Chapter 3 — VIN and Cowl-Tag Decoding

The VIN sits at the base of the windshield, driver's side, and follows the family pattern: **3** (Oldsmobile), **44** (the 442 series — the digits that separate a 442 from a Cutlass), body code **87** Holiday coupe / **67** convertible / **77** Sports Coupe, **9** for 1969, the assembly-plant letter (M Lansing, E Linden, Z Fremont; Oshawa-built cars come from Canada), and the sequential number. Since 1968 that sequential number is also stamped on the engine block and transmission case — the three stamps must agree on a matching-numbers car.

The cowl tag adds the Fisher Body story: ST69 and the body-style number (34487 on a Holiday coupe), the Fisher body sequence — assigned before the VIN and **not** expected to match it — trim code, paint codes, and the build date (12D = fourth week of December). A documented example: trim **930** is black vinyl bucket seats, and paint **75** in 1969 is Aztec Gold — note that paint codes are year-specific; 75 means something else in 1970. Some 1969 tags also carry option codes (D55 console, M21 close-ratio 4-speed appear on documented cars). Read the tag as the car's birth certificate for color and trim, then verify performance options against the hardware and the paperwork — neither the VIN nor the tag alone proves a W-30.

Chapter 4 — The 400: One Engine, Three Tunes

Engine	Rating	Torque	Notes
400 4-barrel (manual)	350 hp	440 lb-ft	Standard engine, stick tune
400 4-barrel (automatic)	325 hp	440 lb-ft	Standard engine, automatic tune
400 W-30	360 hp @ 5,400	440 lb-ft @ 3,600	Chapter 5
350 W-31	325 hp @ 5,600	360 lb-ft	Small-block W-car
400 W-32	350 hp	440 lb-ft	Cold-air package, milder tune
455 Hurst/Olds	380 hp @ 5,000	500 lb-ft @ 3,200	Chapter 7

The 400's restoration story is calibration honesty: a standard car with an automatic should not be 'corrected' to the 350-horsepower manual tune during a rebuild without documenting the change, because the rating difference is factory-original, not wear.

Chapter 5 — The W-30 Package in Depth

The 1969 W-30 (1,389 built; about \$263 on the sticker) is a system, and a correct car shows all of it:

- **Force-Air induction** — dual scoops beneath the front bumper feeding hoses to a sealed air cleaner. This is the 1969 system; there is no factory W-30 hood for this year.
- **'D' cylinder heads** (casting 400370) and a high-lift camshaft (328/328 advertised duration in period documentation), with a specially calibrated distributor.
- **Red plastic inner fender liners** — the lightweight W-car signature, shared with the W-31.
- **Heavy-duty radiator** and the rest of the cooling margin the cam demands.
- **Brakes follow the cam.** The W-30's low idle vacuum often mandated manual heavy-duty drum brakes from the factory — a 1969 W-30 with manual drums can be exactly as-built, where the same setup on a 1970 would be a question. Verify against the build paperwork, not against habit.

Body-style splits worth knowing: only 171 of the 1,389 W-30s were Sports Coupes — the pillared car drag racers preferred — and across the whole 1966–72 run, W-30 convertibles total just 666. Paperwork discipline from the 1970 guide applies double here: the W-30 premium rides on documentation.