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1970 Dodge Challenger Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1970 Dodge Challenger

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Production

76,925 (reported) Single-year coverage.
Factory-correct specifications. No guesswork — where
sources conflict, this guide says so.

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Single-year coverage. Factory-correct specifications. No guesswork.

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About This Guide

This is the RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide for the 1970 Dodge Challenger — one model, one year, nothing else. Every specification in this guide was checked against marque references, factory literature excerpts, and enthusiast documentation before it was written.

Our operating ethic is simple: we don't lie and we don't steal, we offer value. That means three things for this guide. First, no invented specifications — every number has a source. Second, where reputable sources disagree, the disagreement is disclosed in the text and in the Sources, Conflicts & Omissions section rather than papered over. Third, where a detail could not be verified, it is omitted and the omission is recorded — an honest gap beats a confident fabrication.

How to use this guide: start with the VIN and fender-tag (or door data plate) decoding sections to establish exactly what your car was when it left the factory. Use the engine, transmission, axle, paint, and casting sections to verify that what is on the car today matches what should be there. Use the rust and restoration-sequence sections to plan the work. And keep this guide in the shop — it is a working document, not a coffee-table book.

A final note: these cars are sixty years old. Parts have been swapped, tags have been lost, and memories have faded. Trust

the metal — casting numbers, date codes, and stampings — over stories. When in doubt, photograph everything and verify against the factory service manual for your year.

1. Manufacturer History: Dodge

Dodge began in 1900 as the Dodge Brothers Machine Shop, supplying parts — and then complete cars — with a reputation for overbuilt durability. The first Dodge Brothers automobile appeared in 1914, and the brothers' obsession with quality made 'Dependability' the brand's watchword. After both brothers died in 1920, the company was sold to Chrysler in 1928, becoming the corporation's mainstream, slightly sportier division.

Dodge found its performance voice in the 1950s with the Red Ram Hemi V8 and Exner's Forward Look styling, then doubled down in the 1960s: the 1966 Charger invented the fastback muscle car, the Coronet put big-block power in a mid-size package, and the 1968 Super Bee answered Plymouth's Road Runner with Dodge's own budget brawler. The 1969 Charger Daytona and its Plymouth Superbird sibling took the aero wars to NASCAR's fastest tracks.

Like Plymouth, Dodge benefited from Chrysler's deep engineering bench: the LA small-block, B/RB big-block, and 426 Hemi engines; the A833 four-speed and TorqueFlite automatics; the 8-3/4-inch and Dana 60 rear axles; and torsion-bar front suspension that made Mopars handle. Dodge's muscle cars were typically a half-step more upscale than their Plymouth twins, which is why survivors in factory-correct condition are so prized today.

The muscle era ended with the 1971 model year for high compression, and Dodge pivoted to personal luxury (Charger), compacts (Dart, Colt), and eventually the minivan. But the 1967-1971 B-body 1970 Dodge Challenger

performance cars — Coronet R/T, Super Bee, and Charger R/T — are cornerstone collector cars, and their restoration is supported by factory documentation, Galen Govier's decoding references, and a mature reproduction market.

2. Model History: Dodge Challenger

The Dodge Challenger arrived for 1970 as Dodge's long-awaited pony car — a year after the Plymouth



...a moved to the new E-body platform, and Dodge finally got its own version. The Challenger was bigger, roomier, and more comfort-oriented than the Mustang and Camaro it chased, with a full range of engines from the 225 Slant Six to the 426 Hemi. It sold 76,925 copies in its debut year — a strong start that the market would never repeat.

The R/T (Road/Track) was the performance flagship for 1970-1971: the 383 Magnum standard in 1970, with the 340, 440 Magnum, 440 Six Pack, and 426 Hemi optional. The R/T came as a hardtop (JS23), an SE hardtop (JS29, with the smaller formal rear window and luxury trim), and a convertible (JS27). The 1970-1971 convertibles are among the rarest and most valuable E-bodies — especially Hemi convertibles, which are seven-figure cars.

1971 brought the federally mandated changes and the beginning of the end: the 440 Magnum was dropped from the Challenger (the Six Pack continued), compression ratios began falling, and production collapsed to about 26,000 cars. The 1971 R/T — about 4,000 built, with just 71 Hemi cars reported — is the rarest R/T year.

For 1972 the R/T was replaced by the Rallye option package, the convertible was dropped, and the big-blocks were gone — the lineup was 225, 318, and 340 only, all net-rated. 1973 dropped the six-cylinder (318 standard, 340 optional) and added federal bumper guards. Production ended after 1974, and the Challenger name would sleep until 1978 (as a Mitsubishi import) and return in earnest for 2008. For the restorer, the Challenger is E-body Mopar: unit-body pony car with torsion-bar front suspension, a huge range of factory engines, and superb parts interchange with the Plymouth Barracuda. The E-body reproduction market is the deepest in the Mopar hobby — but so is the clone market. R/T and Hemi claims require the VIN, the fender tag, the broadcast sheet, and factory documentation to agree. Trust the metal.

3. What Makes the 1970 Unique

The 1970 Challenger is the debut year — the car Dodge buyers had been waiting for, arriving on the E-body platform shared with the Plymouth Barracuda but with its own styling, its own attitude, and a broader, more comfort-oriented mission. 76,925 were built, making 1970 by far the best-selling Challenger year — and the year with the broadest engine range, from the 225 Slant Six to the 426 Hemi.

The R/T is the 1970 performance story. Standard engine: the 383 Magnum four-barrel (335 hp). Options: the 340 four-barrel (275 hp), the 440 Magnum (375 hp), the 440 Six Pack (390 hp), and the 426 Hemi (425 hp). The R/T came three ways: hardtop (JS23, 13,796 reported), SE hardtop (JS29, 3,753 reported, with 1970 Dodge Challenger

the smaller formal rear window, vinyl roof, and luxury trim), and convertible (JS27, 963 reported). The R/T convertible — especially Hemi and Six Pack convertibles — is blue-chip E-body royalty.

VIN coding for 1970: J = Challenger, H = base / S = R/T, then body (23 hardtop, 27 convertible, 29 SE hardtop), then the engine code — C (225), G (318), H (340), L (383 2-bbl), N (383 Magnum), U (440), V (440+6), R (Hemi) — then 0 for the year. Example: JS23N0 = R/T hardtop, 383 Magnum, 1970. The fifth character (engine code) is the single most important character on the car.

1970-only details are extensive: the grille, the taillight panel, the interior trim, and the debut-year-only parts throughout. The R/T's standard equipment — heavy-duty suspension, brakes, badging, hood treatments — is the originality checklist. The SE's formal rear window and luxury trim are SE-only parts.

Restoration notes specific to 1970: the E-body reproduction market is the deepest in the Mopar hobby, which is both a blessing and a curse — every R/T part is reproduced, so clones are easy and documentation is everything. The 1970-only trim is the sourcing challenge against 1971-74 cars. Hemi cars (287 reported across all 1970 Challenger bodies) require factory documentation — at current values, no exceptions.

Year-to-year changes at a glance.