

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1973 Chevrolet Squarebody Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1973 Chevrolet Squarebody Restoration Guide

Model Years 1973

Model year	1973 - Rounded Line year 1 of 15 (pickups to 1987)
Engines	250, 292 I6; 307 (one year), 350, 454 V8
Trim ladder	Custom / Custom Deluxe / Cheyenne / Cheyenne Super
4x4	NP203 full-time (new); NP205 part-time
Identifiers	Recessed grille; orange turn signals

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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How This Guide Works

This is a **single-year restoration** guide for the 1973 Chevrolet and GMC C/K - one year of the Rounded Line (1973-1987 pickups), covered on its own because that is how these trucks were built and how they must be restored. Specifications were checked against the marque model history and powertrain tables, the Raybuck restoration reference, and period sales literature. Where sources disagree, this guide prints the disagreement instead of guessing.

Scope. Covers 1973 C10/C20/C30 (2WD) and K10/K20/K30 (4WD) pickups and chassis-cabs. Blazer/Jimmy and Suburban share this architecture and have their own RestorationEssentials guides. GMC trucks share the platform but carry their own trim names and badging, noted where they differ.

Where 1973 sits in the run

- **Coming in:** the Action Line gives way to an all-new truck - new cab, new frame with leaf-spring rear suspension throughout, computer-and wind-tunnel-developed styling.
- **Leaving:** 1974 keeps the recessed grille and orange signals and adds optional door drip moldings; the trim ladder and engine menu carry over without the 307.

Platform Snapshot

The Rounded Line (the public's 'Squarebody') ran as the C/K pickup from 1973 to 1987, then as the R/V in heavy and SUV roles to 1991. 1973 trucks are early-face trucks: windshield wipers park behind the hood, side markers are vertical, and the hood sits level with the fender tops.

Fact	Detail
Model year	1973
Designation	C = 2WD, K = 4WD; 10/20/30 = 1/2-, 3/4-, 1-ton
Wheelbases	117.5 in (short bed), 131.5 in (long bed), 164.5 in (crew cab)
Fuel tanks	Outboard of the frame rails (sidesaddle layout)

The 1973 Register - What Makes a 1973 a 1973

- Generation launch: the all-new Rounded Line - recessed front grille with orange turn signals (Chevrolet), GMC grilles divided in thirds; wipers park behind the hood; vertical side markers; windshield-embedded radio antenna (new).
- First four-door crew cab in the C/K line and the first factory dual-rear-wheel pickup (Big Dooley, 1-ton) debut this year; the Bonus Cab crew-without-rear-seat configuration is part of the launch range.
- The 307 V8 is offered for 1973 ONLY in this generation - a one-year engine. The 454 replaces the 402 as the big-block and is C-series (2WD) only.
- NP203 full-time 4WD (with center differential and Loc positions) and the conventional NP205 part-time system both debut; the Eaton automatic locking rear differential (G86, later G80) is introduced.
- Trim ladder is the carried-over four-step line: Custom, Custom Deluxe, Cheyenne, Cheyenne Super - Scottsdale and Silverado do not exist yet.



VIN and Data-Plate Decoding

1973 trucks use the pre-standardization GM truck VIN (the 17-digit standardized VIN arrives in 1981). The system carries manufacturer, chassis (C/K), engine, load class, body, model year, assembly plant, and serial. Engine-code assignments moved as engines came and went, so decode with a year-correct table. The glovebox SPID (Service Parts Identification) label lists every RPO the truck was built with and remains the final word on factory options - photograph it before it fades.

Engines

Five engines at launch, all net ratings. The 250 six is standard; the 454 is the top option, 2WD only.

Engine	Output (net)	Notes
250 I6 (LD4)	105 hp; 185 lb-ft	Standard; 1-bbl Monojet
292 I6 (L25)	120 hp; 215 lb-ft	Heavy-duty tall-deck six
307 V8 (LG8)	130 hp; 220 lb-ft	1973 ONLY in this generation
350 V8 (LS9)	175 hp; 275 lb-ft	4-bbl; LT9 160 hp in HD chassis
454 V8 (LE8)	230 hp; 360 lb-ft	C-series only; replaces the 402

Reading Chevrolet casting and date codes

- Block casting number: driver's-side rear bellhousing flange. Assembly stamp: front passenger-side deck pad - month/day plus suffix code.
- Decode casting number, casting date, and suffix together; the casting date should precede the truck's build date by weeks.
- Truck suffix tables differ from passenger-car tables, and the format changed around 1970 - decode truck engines with truck references.

Transmissions and Transfer Cases

Unit	Type	Application
3-speed manual	Column shift	Base, sixes
SM465	4-speed manual	Heavy-duty; granny-low first
TH350	3-speed auto	Small-blocks
TH400	3-speed auto	Big-blocks and heavy duty
NP203	Full-time, chain-driven	1973-79 4x4 - cast-iron case
NP205	Part-time, gear-driven	Conventional 4x4; standard with sixes

The NP203, honestly. The NP203 is a full-time case with an internal differential: positions are Low Loc, Low, Neutral, High, and High Loc. Drive it in High on the street; Loc locks the differential for low traction - never on dry pavement. Many were later converted to part-time with lockout hubs; know which one you have before diagnosing driveline bind.