

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1974 Ford Bronco Restoration Guide

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RESTORATION ESSENTIALS

1974 Ford Bronco

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

RestorationEssentials single-year guide · Model year 1974 only · Early Bronco (first generation), 92-inch wheelbase

KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

- **Model year covered:** 1974 only. This guide does not cover other years except where differences from 1974 are explicitly noted.
- **Body styles (1974):** U15 Wagon only.
- **Engines (1974):** 200 cu in inline six (S) — 84 hp (SAE net) at 1973 rating; 302 cu in V8 (G) — Net rating — see 1973 note.
- **Transmission (1974):** 3-speed manual or C4 automatic (V8). The J-shifter is now the only transfer-case setup, including with the manual transmission (Consumer Guide).
- **Front axle / brakes (1974):** Dana 44; Drums all around.
- **Production (1974):** 18,786 (Consumer Guide). Hagerty cites 21,400 built — see the corrections file..

1. Manufacturer history: Ford

Ford Motor Company was incorporated on June 16, 1903. By the mid-1960s Ford had deep four-wheel-drive experience — it had built more than 270,000 Jeeps during World War II and designed the M151 MUTT in 1951 — but no civilian off-roader of its own. Product manager Donald Frey and Lee Iacocca saw Jeep's CJ-5 and International Harvester's Scout selling strongly and wanted a share of that market.

The Bronco, introduced in August 1965 as a 1966 model, was Ford's answer: a purpose-built short-wheelbase (92-inch) 4x4 on its own box-section frame, shared with no other Ford line, with coil-sprung Mono-Beam front suspension, radius arms, and a track bar — a more civilized machine than the CJ, with roll-up windows, a padded dash, and a fully synchronized three-speed. It ran twelve model years essentially unchanged in outline, evolving by accumulation — safety equipment, a stronger front axle, an automatic, power steering, disc brakes — before the full-size F-Series-based Bronco replaced it for 1978.

2. Model history: the early Bronco, and where 1974 sits

The first-generation Bronco ran 1966–1977 on its own chassis: U13 Roadster, U14 half-cab Pickup, and U15 Wagon at launch; the Roadster ended after 1968, the Pickup after 1972, and the Wagon carried the line alone to 1977. The changes that matter, in order: safety equipment and the Sport package (1967), federal markers and the end of the 289 and the Roadster (1968), the 302 and a strengthened body (1969), Sport as a trim level (1970), the Dana 44 front axle and the Stroppe Baja Bronco (1971), net ratings, the J-pattern shifter, and the Ranger package (1972), the 200 six, the C4 automatic, and power steering (1973), detail-only changes (1974), the V8-only range (1975), front disc brakes and quicker steering (1976), and the final-year revisions (1977). This guide covers 1974 only; the year-change register in Section 3 states exactly what 1974 changed, what it kept, and what it ended.

3. What is unique about the 1974 Bronco

- The quiet year — 1974 changes are detail changes, which makes them exactly the ones restorers get wrong. The automatic's gear-indicator quadrant is now lighted.
- Roofed Broncos trade the map light for a dome light (Hagerty).
- Parchment is the only interior trim color available (Consumer Guide) — a 1974 with a factory-colored interior other than parchment is mis-trimmed or mis-dated.
- The front limited-slip differential leaves the order guide, and the 4.11 final-drive gear is discontinued (Hagerty); Consumer Guide records the six and the 4.11 gear as unavailable in California specifically — either way, a 1974 ordered new with a front limited-slip is a claim that needs build paperwork.
- Model year 1974 opened under the first OPEC oil embargo — context for the sales slide that shapes the Bronco's final years.

Year-change register — 1974 vs. the year before:

- DELETED: front limited-slip differential option; 4.11 gear option (Hagerty — see conflict note); six-cylinder and 4.11 availability in California (Consumer Guide).
- CHANGED: lighted automatic quadrant; dome light replaces map light; parchment-only interior; J-shifter universal.
- LAST YEAR: 200 six.

4. Technical restoration data — 1974 Ford Bronco

4.1 Specification table (1974)

Item	1974 specification
Body styles	U15 Wagon only
Transmission / transfer case	3-speed manual or C4 automatic (V8). The J-shifter is now the only transfer-case setup, including with the manual transmission (Consumer Guide).
Front axle	Dana 44
Rear axle	Ford 9-inch
Brakes	Drums all around
Steering	Power steering optional (V8)
Production	18,786 (Consumer Guide). Hagerty cites 21,400 built — see the corrections file.
Prices	Not printed — see the corrections file.
Colors	18 colors (Hagerty).

Engines (1974):

Engine	Rating	Notes
200 cu in inline six (S)	84 hp (SAE net) at 1973 rating	Final year for the six in the Bronco. No longer available in California, where emissions rules were stricter (Consumer Guide).
302 cu in V8 (G)	Net rating — see 1973 note	The only engine from 1975 on.

4.2 VIN and warranty-plate decoding

The VIN is carried on the warranty plate on the inner face of the glovebox door, and the same number is stamped on top of the right frame rail near the passenger footwell / body mount. The two must match; the frame stamp governs when they disagree. The warranty plate also carries paint, trim, axle, transmission, and DSO codes — decode the plate, then verify the axle ratio against the tag on the axle housing, because gears are the most commonly changed item on these trucks.

Code	Meaning
U13	Roadster (1966–1968 only)
U14	Half-cab Pickup (called Sports Utility in 1966)
U15	Wagon
F	170 cu in inline six
S	200 cu in inline six (1973–1974)
A	240 cu in inline six (1968, rare — Broncozone decode reference)
N	289 cu in V8 (1966–1968)
G	302 cu in V8 (1969–1977)