

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1976 Dodge Ramcharger Restoration Guide

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1976 Dodge Ramcharger Restoration Guide

Model Years 1976

Model year	1976 - Ramcharger year 3 of 8 (1974-1981 span)
Generation	First (removable roof)
Drive	4WD (AW100) and 2WD
Roof	No roof, dealer fabric top, or optional removable steel roof
Identifiers	Eggcrate grille pattern follows the 1976 pickup face.

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 1976 Dodge Ramcharger - one year, 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, Hagerty's and MotorTrend's published histories, and factory literature. Where sources disagree, this guide prints the disagreement instead of guessing.



Scope. Covers the 1976 Ramcharger, 2WD and 4WD. This is the honest carryover year of the first generation - the guide says so rather than inventing changes.

Where 1976 sits in the run

- **Coming in:** 1975 added the 2WD truck and the Sno*Drift win.
- **Leaving:** 1977 brings the pickup line's facelift grille and the Macho and Top Hand special editions.

Platform Snapshot

Fact	Detail
Model year	1976
Platform	Chrysler AD, shortened pickup chassis
Wheelbase	106 in (9 in shorter than the short-bed pickup)
Drive	4WD (AW100) and 2WD
Roof	No roof, dealer fabric top, or optional removable steel roof
Transfer case (4WD)	NP203 full-time (4WD, standard)
Grille / front tell	Pickup-line eggcrate grille year; round headlights
Engines	225 slant six, 318 LA V8, 360 LA V8, 400 B V8, 440 RB V8
Twin	Plymouth Trail Duster (1974-1981 run)

The 1976 Register - What Makes a 1976 a 1976

- A carryover year, stated plainly: no styling, roof, or drivetrain change defines 1976. The truck is the 1975 specification continued.
- The one dated fact that matters: the passenger seat is still optional in 1976 - its last year as an option. It becomes standard equipment for 1977.
- The grille follows the pickup line's 1976 eggcrate pattern - the front-clip tell for the year.
- The five-engine menu, NP203 full-time case, and removable-roof choices all carry over unchanged.

VIN, Fender Tag, and Build Date

The VIN, the frame stamp, and the fender tag tell you what the truck is; the broadcast sheet tells you how it was built. On this model the build date itself can be a specification - 1974's door split turns on it - so read the tag before the truck, every time.

Engines: The 1976 Menu

All ratings are SAE net as published for the year. The fender tag and block stampings are the authority for the truck in front of you.

Engine	Output (net)	Notes
225 slant six	Base (2WD)	Six-cylinder base
318 LA V8	150 hp	Volume V8



Engine	Output (net)	Notes
360 LA V8	Small block	Optional
400 B V8	Big block	Optional
440 RB V8	225 hp	Top engine

Restoring the 1976 engines

- 318/360 LA small blocks: the survivors - most trucks, best parts support. Keep the 360's balance hardware with the 360.
- Big blocks (1974-78): verify the radiator is the correct big-block unit and the manifolds are sound; claims need paperwork.
- 225 slant six: simple and durable; check the manifold and carburetor first.
- Casting dates should precede the build date by weeks.

Transmissions and Transfer Cases

Unit	Type	Application
3-speed manual	Column/floor by build	Base
4-speed manual (NP435)	Floor-shift, granny low	The 4WD favorite
TorqueFlite 727	3-speed automatic	Optional across the line

NP203 full-time case, as set since launch. By 1976 the aftermarket part-time conversion kits were a common owner response to full-time fuel consumption - a converted truck is modified, and the guide treats it that way.

Axles, Suspension, and Brakes

- Leaf springs at both ends - the Ramcharger kept them its whole life, and the articulation is part of the appeal.
- Dana 44 front axle; Chrysler 9.25-inch rear (8.25 on some builds); limited-slip available on the 9.25.
- Front disc, rear drum brakes, power-assisted; power steering optional.
- Full-time trucks (NP203 years): the front axle's bearing design is the known weak point - inspect first, budget honestly.

Body, Rust, and Sheet Metal

The Ramcharger shares the pickup's galvanized-steel head start and adds problems of its own: a huge removable roof (1974-80) whose seals age, and rear quarters that live in the spray zone. Work this map:

- Rockers and rear quarters - the documented Ramcharger rust zones.
- Floor pans, especially under the roof's drip path; roof flanges and gutters on steel-top trucks.
- Lower doors and the tailgate (1974-80) - the flip-up rear window frame rots from inside.
- Front fenders: Ramcharger fenders have their own taper and do NOT interchange with pickup fenders, whatever a seller says. Buy the best ones you can find.

Sheet metal support is moderate: LMC's Ramcharger catalog covers 1974-1993 with live stock, and the reproduction houses carry patch panels. The removable steel roof is salvage-only - a complete, straight top is worth real money, and half-door hardware (early 1974) is effectively unobtainable new.