

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1978 Chevrolet Squarebody Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1978 Chevrolet Squarebody Restoration Guide

Model Years 1978

Model year	1978 - fuel door; first light-truck diesel
Engines	250, 292 I6; 305, 350, 400, 454 V8; 5.7 diesel (new)
Trim ladder	Custom Deluxe / Scottsdale / Cheyenne / Silverado
Interior tell	Brushed aluminum replaces woodgrain
Identifiers	Fuel-filler door (Fleetside); flatter dash panels

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 1978 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 1978 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 1978 sits in the run

- **Coming in:** the 1977 grille and menu, plus the diesel experiment and the fuel door.
- **Leaving:** 1979 darkens the grille bars, chromes the signals into the fascia, and gives every body style the fuel door.

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. 1978 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	1978
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 1978 Register - What Makes a 1978 a 1978

- A redesigned fuel-filler DOOR replaces the exposed fuel cap on Fleetside/Wideside trucks (Stepside and Big Dooley follow for 1979) - the classic 1978 tell.
- Woodgrain dash trim (Cheyenne/Silverado) is replaced by brushed-aluminum trim, and all models get flatter dash trim panels - black on the lower trims, aluminum-look above.
- The 5.7L Oldsmobile diesel V8 (LF9) debuts as an option on half-ton C-series trucks - the first diesel in an American light-duty pickup, built for economy, not towing.
- Stepsides get squared-off taillights with built-in backup lights and side markers; rear fenders are smoothed where the old markers were.
- The 250 six returns on regular-cab C20 models - California only for 1978 (nationwide for 1979).



VIN and Data-Plate Decoding

1978 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

Seven engines for 1978, counting the new diesel.

Engine	Output (net)	Notes
250 I6 (LD4)	105 hp; 185 lb-ft	Returns on C20 regular cab (CA)
292 I6 (L25)	120 hp; 215 lb-ft	Heavy-duty six
305 V8 (LE9)	160 hp; 235 lb-ft	C-series half-ton
350 V8 (LS9)	175 hp; 275 lb-ft	4-bbl; LT9 160 hp HD
400 V8 (LF4)	185 hp; 300 lb-ft	K-series only, HD emissions
454 V8 (LE8)	230 hp; 360 lb-ft	C-series only
5.7 diesel (LF9)	120 hp; 220 lb-ft	NEW; Oldsmobile diesel; C half-ton only

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	4x4
NP205	Part-time, gear-driven	4x4 option

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.