

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1978 Ford F-Series Dentside Restoration Guide

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1978 Ford F-Series Dentside Restoration Guide

Model Years 1978

Model year	1978 - new face; the Lariat debuts
Engines	300, 302, 351M, 400, 460
Grille	Single-piece; F-O-R-D letters move to the hood
Headlamps	Round on Custom; rectangular on Ranger XLT / Lariat
New this year	Ranger Lariat trim; SuperCab 4WD choices widen
VIN format	11-character warranty number

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.

Published by RestorationEssentials



How This Guide Works

This is a **single-year restoration** guide for the 1978 Ford F-Series - one year of the sixth generation (1973-1979), the “Dentside” trucks named for the stamped body-side recess. The year gets its own guide because Ford changed these trucks every year - cab styles, series codes, engine codes that change meaning mid-generation, grilles, and headlamps - and a factory-correct restoration matches the year on the warranty plate. Specifications were checked against the 1973-1979 Ford Truck Master Parts Catalog data published by FORDification and the LMC Truck identification references. Where sources disagree, this guide prints the disagreement instead of guessing.

Scope. Covers 1978 F-100, F-150, F-250, and F-350 light-duty pickups, chassis-cabs, and SuperCabs. Medium-duty trucks and the 1978-79 Bronco (separate guide) are outside this guide's scope.

Where 1978 sits in the run

- Coming in: the 1977 split-grille truck - badges already on the cowl and the filler door fitted, but the original two-piece face.
- Leaving: 1979 makes rectangular headlamps universal and closes the generation. A 1978's trim-dependent headlamps are a one-year-only arrangement.

Platform Snapshot

Fact	Detail
Model year	1978 (Dentside year 6 of 7)
Body styles	Regular cab, crew cab, SuperCab; Styleside/Flareside; chassis-cab
Drive	2WD and 4WD across the line
Engines	300 I6; 302; 351M; 400; 460
Transmissions	3-speed manual; C4/C6 automatics; NP435 4-speed
Transfer case (4x4)	NP205 part-time; NP203 full-time (SuperCab)
Front brakes	Discs standard on F-100/F-150

The 1978 Register - What Makes a 1978 a 1978

- The split grille is replaced by a larger single-piece grille that no longer incorporates the headlamps, turn signals, or the F-O-R-D callout. The headlamps sit in housings outboard of the grille with the turn signals below them, and a chrome F-O-R-D letter set moves onto the hood above the grille.
- Headlamps split by trim - for this year only: ROUND lamps on the Custom; new RECTANGULAR lamps on the Ranger XLT and the new Ranger Lariat, with optional chrome bezels and a chrome grille insert.
- The Ranger Lariat debuts at the top of the ladder - the luxury trim that defines late-Dentside trucks.
- Dual fuel tanks become standard equipment (bed-mounted tanks, per the generation references).
- SuperCab four-wheel drive widens: part-time (NP205, gear-driven) or full-time (NP203, chain-driven) is now optional on SuperCab models.
- The second-generation Bronco arrives on a shortened F-100 chassis (covered by its own RestorationEssentials guide).



Printed as a conflict. Sources differ on the plain Ranger's 1978 headlamps: the generation history says round lamps for Custom AND regular Ranger, rectangular for XLT and Lariat; the buyer's-guide summary assigns rectangular lamps to "higher trims" generally. Custom = round and XLT/Lariat = rectangular are agreed. For a plain Ranger, verify against the truck's own build documentation before buying lamps or bezels.

VIN and Warranty-Plate Decoding

Same 11-character warranty-number system as the Bumpside: series (3) + engine (1) + plant (1) + consecutive unit number (6). Decode the door warranty plate for paint, trim, axle, and transmission codes as well. **Warning:** two engine codes change meaning inside this generation - always decode with the model year attached.

Code	Series (1978)
F10	F-100 2WD pickup
F14	F-150 4WD pickup
F15	F-150 2WD pickup
F25 / F26	F-250 2WD / 4WD pickup
F35	F-350 2WD pickup
F37 / F38	F-350 2WD / 4WD chassis-cab
X10-X35	SuperCab variants

Code	Engine (1978)
A	460 V8
B	300 I6 1-bbl
G	302 V8 2-bbl
H	351M V8 2-bbl
S	400 V8 2-bbl
J	460 V8 4-bbl

460 and 4WD. The 460 remains a 2WD engine from the factory in this generation.

Engines

Engine	Family	Notes
300 I6	Ford I6	Base engine
302 V8	Windsor	2-bbl
351M V8	335-series	2-bbl (H)
400 V8	335-series	2-bbl (S)
460 V8	385-series	4-bbl (A/J); 2WD only