

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1979 Dodge Ramcharger Restoration Guide

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1979 Dodge Ramcharger Restoration Guide

Model Years 1979

Model year	1979 - Ramcharger year 6 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	Quads on an upper, round duals on a base - both correct for 1979; a single mismatched side is a repair, not a variant.

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 1979 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 1979 Ramcharger, 2WD and 4WD - first generation, refreshed face, small-block-only menu.

Where 1979 sits in the run

- **Coming in:** 1978 closed the big-block era and introduced the part-time system.
- **Leaving:** 1980 swaps the NP203 for the part-time NP208 and closes the removable-roof generation.

Platform Snapshot

Fact	Detail
Model year	1979
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 standard; part-time system available
Grille / front tell	Refreshed front; stacked quad rectangular headlights on upper models, round duals on base
Engines	225 slant six, 318 LA V8, 360 LA V8
Twin	Plymouth Trail Duster (1974-1981 run)

The 1979 Register - What Makes a 1979 a 1979

- Stacked quad rectangular headlights arrive on upper-level models with the pickup line's front-end refresh; base models keep the older round dual lamps. Both faces are factory-correct for 1979.
- The 360 is rated at 160 hp for 1979.
- No big blocks: the engine menu is 225 (2WD base), 318, and 360 - the 360 is now the top engine by default.
- Roof, cases, and chassis carry the first-generation specification into its final two years.

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 1979 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	135 hp	Volume V8



Engine	Output (net)	Notes
360 LA V8	160 hp	Top engine for 1979

Engine note. The range guide's claim of stacked quads on upper models for 1978 is corrected here: the documented pickup-line front refresh - and the quads with it - is a 1979 change. See the corrections file for this guide.

Restoring the 1979 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 standard in its penultimate year, part-time system available. The NP208 replaces the NP203 outright for 1980 - know which case a late-built truck carries before assuming.

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