

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1988 Chevrolet GMT400 Restoration Guide

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1988 Chevrolet GMT400 Restoration Guide

Model Years 1988

Model year	1988 - GMT400 launch year
Engines	4.3 V6; 305, 350, 454 TBI V8; 6.2 diesel
Cabs	Regular and extended (new); 117.5 / 131.5 / 155.5 in
4x4	IFS with torsion bars; Insta-Trac shift-on-the-fly
Trim ladder	Cheyenne / Scottsdale / Silverado

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 1988 Chevrolet C/K on the GMT400 platform - one year of the 1988-1994 TBI-era trucks, 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 and period literature. Where sources disagree, this guide prints the disagreement instead of guessing.



Scope. Covers 1988 Chevrolet C1500/C2500/C3500 (2WD) and K1500/K2500/K3500 (4WD) pickups and chassis-cabs. GMC Sierras share the platform with their own trim names (SL/SLX/SLE), noted where they differ. The live range SKU names this line 'C1500' for its best-known model; the platform covers all three payload series.

Where 1988 sits in the run

- **Coming in:** the R/V Squarebody, which serves on beside it in crew-cab and heavy roles.
- **Leaving:** 1989 adds the short-bed extended cab, the Z71 package, and the Sport Equipment Package - the launch range completes itself.

Platform Snapshot

The GMT400 is GM's fourth-generation C/K: aero-styled, comfort-first, and built on a fully welded frame with an independent front suspension on both drives. The 1988-1994 trucks are the TBI years - throttle-body injection, basic electronics, and parts that interchange across millions of trucks. 1988 sits in the launch phase of that span.

Fact	Detail
Model year	1988
Designation	C = 2WD, K = 4WD; 1500/2500/3500 payload series
Beds	Fleetside 6.5/8 ft; Sportside 6.5 ft (fiberglass fenders)
Fuel system	Throttle-body injection (gasoline); tank between the rails
Steering/brakes	Power steering standard; front discs, rear drums, rear ABS

The 1988 Register - What Makes a 1988 a 1988

- Platform launch: GMT400 replaces the Squarebody as the C/K pickup (production began December 8, 1986; on sale April 1987 as a 1988 model). Donald Wood's aero styling, flush glass, sedan-style doors - and no vent windows.
- Chevrolet adopts GMC's 1500/2500/3500 payload nomenclature; the extended cab is a first for a GM full-size truck (the long extended cab rides a 155.5 in wheelbase this year; regular cabs carry over 117.5 and 131.5 in).
- K-trucks go independent at the front (torsion bars) with Insta-Trac shift-on-the-fly 4WD; the frame is fully welded with boxed front rails; power steering and rear-wheel ABS are part of the launch specification.
- The Sportside bed debuts - 6.5 ft only, with fiberglass rear fenders - beside the Fleetside in both bed lengths.
- Trim: Cheyenne returns as the base (replacing Custom Deluxe), with Scottsdale and Silverado above it; Cheyenne trucks carry two headlamps, upper trims four. GMC becomes Sierra across the board (SL/SLX/SLE).

VIN and RPO Decoding

1988 GMT400 VINs use the standard 17-digit format. The 8th character is the engine key (period charts list K for the 5.7 TBI, H for the 5.0, N for the 7.4, and Z for the 4.3 - verify against your year's chart, because codes can shift), and the 10th character is the model year. The series characters name the truck: C = 2WD, K = 4WD; 1500/2500/3500 are the 1/2-, 3/4-, and 1-ton payload series.



The RPO sticker - usually in the glovebox - is the truck's option manifest in three-character codes: engine and transmission, gear ratio, the G80 locking differential, Z71 where applicable, paint and trim. Photograph it before it fades; replacements do not exist, and on any special-model claim (above all a 454 SS) the RPO sticker is the verdict.

Engines

Five engines at launch, shared with the R/V line - all gasoline engines are throttle-body injected. Ratings split by GVWR class; read the row that matches your truck's rating plate.

Engine	Output (net)	Notes
4.3 V6 (LB4)	160 hp; 235 lb-ft	Standard, 1500/2500 under 8,500 lb GVWR
305 V8 (L03)	175 hp; 270 lb-ft	Optional, under 8,500 lb GVWR
350 V8 (L05)	210 hp; 300 lb-ft	Light-duty rating
350 V8 (L05)	185 hp; 295 lb-ft	Heavy rating over 8,500 lb GVWR (1988)
454 V8 (L19)	230 hp; 385 lb-ft	3500/heavy applications at launch
6.2 diesel (LH6/LL4)	126-143 hp; 240-257 lb-ft	By transmission and GVWR class

TBI service doctrine

- Verify fuel pressure with a gauge first - it is the master diagnostic on every TBI truck.
- Inspect the injector spray pattern; a dribbling injector is a drivability problem wearing an ignition costume.
- Rebuild the throttle body with fresh gaskets and cleaned passages; verify coolant-temperature, MAP, throttle-position, and oxygen sensors before condemning the ECM, which is robust.
- Renew the in-tank pump, filter, and sender together, and inspect the tank - rust inside kills pumps and injectors.

Engine numbers and date codes

- Small-block Chevrolet numbering: block casting number on the driver's-side rear flange, casting date, and the stamped application code on the front pad. The date should precede the truck's build by days to weeks.
- On a TBI truck, also record the throttle-body, injector, distributor, and ECM numbers - the injection system's identity matters as much as the block's.
- The 454 and the diesels have their own casting families - verify against the year's references, not small-block lore. Photograph everything before cleaning.

Transmissions and Transfer Cases

Unit	Type	Application
5-speed manual	Overdrive	NEW; 1500/2500-series
SM465 4-speed manual	Granny-low first	3500-series (carried over)
700R4-family 4-speed auto	Overdrive	1500/2500-series option
TH400 3-speed auto	Heavy duty	Sole automatic for 3500-series