

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

OBS Trucks Buyer's Guide: GMT400 & 1992-1997 F-150

Read these pages exactly as they appear in the full guide.
Nothing here is rewritten or summarised — it is the product itself,
so you can judge the depth before you spend a dollar.

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OBS Trucks Buyer's Guide: GMT400 & 1992-1997 F-150

Model Year 1988-1998

Trucks	GM GMT400 C/K (1988-98); Ford F-150 (1992-97)
Engines	350 TBI / 300 I6 / 302 / 351 / diesels
Market	Clean drivers \$11k-16k; specials higher
Watch for	Rust; SS/Lightning clones; 4x4 function
Support	LMC Truck; GMT400.com; Ford truck forums

Every specification in this guide was checked against factory literature, marque references, period road tests, and documented survivor cars. Where sources disagree or the record is silent, this guide says so rather than guessing.

Published by RestorationEssentials

Inside This Guide

The chapter order follows the RestorationEssentials house standard: history first, then year-specific identity, then the technical chapters you will use at the car.



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Chapter 1 - Why OBS Trucks Are the Market's Sweet Spot

OBS - 'Old Body Style' - is the enthusiast name for the 1988-1998 GM GMT400 trucks and, by extension, their Ford contemporaries. These are the trucks that grew up with the current collector generation: simple enough to fix in a driveway, modern enough to drive daily, and - critically - still priced like used trucks rather than collector cars. That window is closing. Clean short-bed 2WD examples have doubled and tripled in a few years; the special trucks (454 SS, Lightning) are already collector-priced. This guide is about buying before the window shuts.

The buyer case: a clean GMT400 or ninth-gen F-150 does everything. Daily driver, tow rig, Home Depot runner, show truck - one vehicle, all roles, parts at every parts store, forums that have answered every question. Nothing else in the collector world offers this utility per dollar.

Chapter 2 - The Contenders: GMT400 vs. Ninth-Gen F-150

The GMT400 Chevrolet/GMC (1988-1998): aero styling, TBI fuel injection through 1995 (Vortec from 1996), coil-spring independent front on 2WDs, Insta-Trac shift-on-the-fly 4x4. The technician's truck - logical, well-documented, with the 350 TBI as the default right answer.

The ninth-gen Ford F-150 (1992-1997): Jack Telnack's aero redesign, twin I-beam front suspension, and an engine lineup led by the immortal 300-cubic-inch straight six. The traditionalist's truck - the six will outlive us all, the 5.0 and 5.8 Windsors are honest V8s, and the Lightning is the factory hot rod.

Head-to-head: the GMT400 is easier to diagnose and has deeper restoration catalog support (LMC Truck's GMT400 coverage is encyclopedic). The Ford counters with the 300 six's unmatched durability legend and generally lower purchase prices. Buy the best individual truck, not the brand - condition dominates everything in this segment.



Chapter 3 - GMT400: The Model Years That Matter

1988-89: Launch years. First-year details, TBI throughout, extended cab from the start. Priced as the oldest - buy on condition.

1990-93: The 454 SS years (1990-93) - the collector truck. 4L80E spreads; 6.5 turbo diesel arrives (1992); crew cab joins (1992). The enthusiast's window.

1994-95: Redesigned interior (1994), R134a A/C, TBI through 1995. The best daily-driver years: modern cabin, simple injection.

1996-98: Vortec engines - more power (the 350 jumps to 255 hp), more complexity, OBD-II diagnostics. Better performance, slightly higher prices, different parts logic. Worth buying, but know which generation you're inspecting.

Chapter 4 - F-150: The Model Years That Matter

1992-93: Launch of the aero ninth gen. 300 six, 302, 351; E4OD, manuals. The Lightning debuts for 1993 - instant collector status.

1994: Interior and detail refinements. The 7.3 Power Stroke turbodiesel arrives mid-year in F-250/350 (1994.5) - the diesel legend begins.

1995: Last Lightning year. Mature ninth-gen - the refined buy.

1996-97: OBD-II (1996), detail changes, the run winds down. The 1997s overlap the new tenth-gen - verify which body you're buying (the classic OBS vs. the rounded 1997+).

Chapter 5 - Engine Guide: Both Brands

Engine	Output	Character
GM 4.3 V6	~160 hp	Honest base; durable; slow
GM 305 V8	~170 hp	Adequate; the compromise
GM 350 TBI	210 hp	The default right answer
GM 454 TBI	~230 hp / 385 lb-ft	Torque monster; thirsty
GM 6.5 diesel	~180-215 hp	Economy/hauling; PMD watch
Ford 300 I6	~145 hp	Immortal; the legend
Ford 302 V8	185 hp	Honest V8; dependable
Ford 351 V8	~205 hp	The towing Windsor
Ford 7.3 diesel	175-215 hp	IDI to Power Stroke legend

The short version: buy the GM 350 or the Ford 300 six for the unkillable daily; buy the 454 or 351 for towing authority; buy the diesels only with service history and diesel knowledge. Avoid nothing on mechanical grounds - every engine here is durable - but price the thirsty ones honestly and verify the diesel-specific failure points (6.5 PMD, 7.3 IDI glow systems).