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The opening pages of

1964 Chevrolet El Camino Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1964 Chevrolet El Camino

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Model year	1964 — first year of the Chevelle-based (A-body) El Camino
Wheelbase	115 inches (shared with the 1964 Chevelle) Body series One series only: 13480 (Chevelle V8) — no Custom model until 1966
Engines	194 six standard; 283 (195/220 hp) or 327 (250/300 hp, mid-year) V8 optional
Transmissions	3-speed manual, 4-speed manual, 2-speed Powerglide

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Single-year coverage. Factory-correct specifications. No guesswork.

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About This Guide

This is the RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide for the 1964 Chevrolet El Camino Restoration Guide — one model, one year, nothing else. Every specification in this guide was checked against marque references, factory literature excerpts, and enthusiast documentation before it was written. Our operating ethic is simple: we don't lie and we don't steal, we offer value. That means three things for this guide. First, no invented specifications — every number has a source. Second, where reputable sources disagree, the disagreement is disclosed in the text and in the Sources, Conflicts & Omissions section rather than papered over. Third, where a detail could not be verified, it is omitted and the omission is recorded — an honest gap beats a confident fabrication.

How to use this guide: start with the VIN and cowl-tag decoding sections to establish exactly what your car was when it left the factory. Use the engine, transmission, axle, paint, and casting sections to verify that what is on the car today matches what should be there. Use the rust and restoration-sequence sections to plan the work. And keep this guide in the shop — it is a working document, not a coffee-table book.

A final note: these cars are sixty years old. Parts have been swapped, tags have been lost, and memories have faded. Trust

the metal — casting numbers, date codes, and stampings — over stories. When in doubt, photograph everything and verify

against the factory service manual for your year.

1. Manufacturer History: Chevrolet

Chevrolet was founded in 1911 by Louis Chevrolet and William C. Durant, and by 1918 it was a division of General Motors — the volume brand on which GM's empire was built. Through the 1920s and 1930s Chevrolet outsold Ford by selling a simple proposition: more car, more engineering, for the same money. The 1929 'Stovebolt' six gave Chevrolet a six-cylinder in a four-cylinder price class, and the brand never looked back.

The 1950s made Chevrolet an American institution. The 1955 small-block V8 — 265 cubic inches, 162 horsepower, light, cheap, and nearly indestructible — is the most significant engine in automotive history, and its descendants powered everything in this guide. The 1957 Bel Air, the 1958 Impala, and the 1961 SS (the car that opens this sub-wave) carried Chevrolet's performance banner while the brand sold more than two million cars a year.

Chevrolet's engineering culture shaped every car in this sub-wave: the small-block V8 family (283, 327, 350) that defined the 1960s; the W-series big-blocks (348, 409) that owned the early-60s drag strips; the Mark IV big-blocks (396, 427, 454) that replaced them; the Muncie four-speed and Turbo Hydra-Matic automatics; and the 10-bolt and 12-bolt rear axles. Chevrolet parts interchange across the GM corporate parts bin on a scale no other brand can match — a gift to the restorer.

The high-compression era ended after 1971, and the 1972 switch to SAE net horsepower ratings rewrote every specification sheet in America. But the 1961-1972 Chevrolet performance cars — Impala SS, Chevelle SS, El Camino SS — remain the blue-chip core of the hobby, supported by the deepest 1964 Chevrolet El Camino

reproduction ecosystem and the most complete factory documentation trail (Protect-O-Plate, build sheets, dealer invoices) of any 1960s American brand.

2. Model History: Chevrolet El Camino

The El Camino began life in 1959 as Chevrolet's answer to the Ford Ranchero — a car up front, a pickup in back, built on the full-size Chevrolet platform. The first generation ran just two model years (1959-1960)



Chevrolet dropped it. It returned in 1964, completely reinvented on the new mid-size Chevelle (A-body) platform, and never left again.

The 1964-1967 El Caminos were Chevelles from the doors forward: same front sheetmetal, same cowl, same dashboard, same front suspension. Behind the cab, an integrated pickup bed replaced the wagon body. The formula worked — production ran 32,000-35,000 a year through the first A-body generation (1964-1967), steady business for a niche vehicle.

The second generation (1968-1972) grew with the restyled A-body: longer, lower, more sculptured. And 1968 brought the milestone that defines this line for collectors — the first factory SS El Camino, the SS396, built as its own separate 138-series model for that one year. For 1969-1970 the SS became an option package on the Custom El Camino, and for 1971-1972 it was an appearance-and-performance option available with several V8s.

Through 1972, the El Camino was always a Chevelle underneath — which is the restorer's greatest advantage. Every mechanical part, most of the front sheetmetal, and the entire interior interchange with the corresponding Chevelle. Only the bed, cab back, and tailgate are El Camino-only — and those are the parts to verify first.

3. What Makes the 1964 Unique

After a three-year absence, the El Camino returned for 1964 — and it came back a completely different animal. The 1959-1960 full-size car was gone; the new El Camino rode Chevrolet's brand-new mid-size A-body platform, sharing its 115-inch wheelbase, front sheetmetal, cowl, dashboard, and front suspension with the 1964 Chevelle. From the doors forward it is a Chevelle; behind the cab, an integrated pickup bed replaced the wagon body.

Chevrolet built 32,548 of them in the comeback year — steady business for a niche vehicle, and a healthy survival rate means 1964 El Caminos still trade regularly. The standard engine was the 194-cubic-inch six; the smart money ordered a 283 V8. There was no Custom model yet, no SS anything — the El Camino was one series (13480), honest work transportation with car manners.

For the restorer, the 1964 is the simplest El Camino of the classic era: one body series, four engines, Chevelle parts interchange for everything ahead of the cab, and first-year details (grille, trim, badging) that are one-year-only and worth getting right.

1964 Chevrolet El Camino

Year-to-year changes at a glance.

■ **THE COMEBACK CAR:** The El Camino nameplate returned after the 1961-1963 gap, reinvented on the new A-body. The 1959-1960 cars share nothing but the name — do not confuse first-generation (full-size) parts or literature with the 1964 car.

■ **ONE SERIES ONLY:** Every 1964 El Camino is VIN series 13480. The Custom El Camino (13580/13680) did not exist until 1966, and no factory SS or big-block El Camino existed before 1966. Any 1964 wearing SS badges is a tribute.

■ **FIRST-YEAR DETAILS:** The 1964 grille (horizontal-bar with centered bowtie), headlight bezels, taillight lenses, and interior trim are one-year-only. The 1965 facelift changed the front end — verify 1964-specific parts before buying.

■ **ENGINE REALITY:** The standard 194 six is a durable, economical engine — but the market pays for the 283 V8 cars. The 220-hp 4-barrel 283 is the desirable 1964 drivetrain; both V8s are small-blocks with full parts interchange.

■ **DOCUMENTATION:** Chevrolet's Protect-O-Plate system began with the 1965 model year — a 1964 car's paperwork trail is the dealer invoice, the build sheet, and the cowl tag. Build sheets hide in the usual A-body places: under the rear seat, above the glovebox, under the carpet.