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1960 Chevrolet Impala Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1960 Chevrolet Impala

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Model	Chevrolet Impala
Model year	1960
Base engine	235 cu-in inline six, 135 hp V8 options 283 (170/230 hp) and 348 (250/280 hp) Styling note Triple round taillights return Impala production ~490,000…

About This Guide

This is the RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide for the 1960 Chevrolet Impala — 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 (trim) 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 fifty to seventy 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 race driver Louis Chevrolet and General Motors founder William C. Durant, who had been forced out of GM and needed a new vehicle company. Durant used Chevrolet's early sales success as the lever to regain control of General Motors, and Chevrolet became a GM division in 1918. From that point on, Chevrolet was GM's volume brand — the division that put America on wheels with affordable, durable cars sold and serviced by the largest dealer network in the country.

Chevrolet's identity was forged by two engineering decisions. The first was the 1955 small-block V8 — a lightweight, compact overhead-valve V8 designed under Ed Cole that delivered V8 power at six-cylinder weight and cost. It made the V8 the default American engine and became the most produced V8 in history, with its basic architecture serving Chevrolet for nearly fifty years. The second was the division's full-size car itself: from the 1955 Bel Air through the Impala's record-shattering 1965 model year — more than one million Impalas sold in a single year, an industry record that still stands — Chevrolet owned the American family car.

For the restorer, Chevrolet's scale is the great advantage. No classic car on earth enjoys deeper reproduction support or a larger knowledge base than the 1955-1973 full-size Chevrolet. Factory service manuals, assembly manuals, and judging standards are widely available; casting numbers, date codes, and suffix codes are thoroughly documented; and the interchange between years and models is enormous. The challenge is not finding information — it is verifying that the information applies to your exact year, because Chevrolet changed details constantly while the cars looked similar.

1960 Chevrolet Impala

2. Model History: Chevrolet Impala

The Impala debuted for 1958 as the top-line Bel Air Impala — a Sport Coupe and a convertible loaded with every bright trim piece Chevrolet offered. It was an instant hit, and for 1959 the Impala became its own series, adding four-door sedans and hardtops. From that point the Impala was Chevrolet's flagship

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ne: more chrome inside and out, plusher interiors, and the widest engine range in the division.
The Impala rode Chevrolet's X-frame from 1958 through 1964, then moved to the new full-perimeter frame for 1965 — the year Impala sales passed one million units, an all-time industry record that still stands. The Super Sport option (1961-1969) made the Impala a performance icon, but the base Impala was always the volume car: six-cylinder and small-block family transportation that happened to wear the prettiest sheetmetal Chevrolet drew.
The fifth-generation Impala of 1971 was the largest Chevrolet ever built — a 121.5-inch wheelbase B-body — and the 1972 convertible was the last Impala ragtop. By 1973 the six was gone from the Impala line, the convertible had moved to the Caprice, and the wagon had rejoined the Impala series. Through every change, the base Impala remained what it was in 1958: the best-appointed full-size Chevrolet most buyers actually bought.

3. What Makes the 1960 Unique

1960 refined the flamboyant 1959 into the year's subtler, more conservative full-size Chevrolet: the wild rear fenders were tamed, and the triple round taillights — the Impala signature for years to come — returned. Approximately 490,000 Impalas were built, confirming the series as Chevrolet's flagship.
Mechanically, 1960 is an evolution year: the 235 six, the 283 in 170- and 230-hp forms, and the 348 at 250 or 280 horsepower, with the same transmission range. The X-frame chassis continued.
From 1960 the VIN format changed: a year digit, then the series code — 17 for the six-cylinder Impala, 18 for the V8 Impala — followed by the body code, plant letter, and sequence. This format runs through 1964.
Year-to-year changes at a glance.

- Subtler restyle; triple round taillights return.
- New VIN format: 17 = Impala six, 18 = Impala V8.
- ~490,000 built.

4. VIN Decoding

1960-1964 full-size Chevrolet VIN: year digit, series code (17 = Impala six, 18 = Impala V8), body code, plant letter, sequence.
1960 Chevrolet Impala
Position
Meaning
Codes / Notes
1
Model year
0 = 1960 (1-4 for 1961-1964)
2-3
Series
17 = Impala six, 18 = Impala V8
4-5
Body style
Body code
6
Assembly plant
Plant letter code
7-12
Production sequence

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