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1969 Chevrolet Impala Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1969 Chevrolet Impala

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Model	Chevrolet Impala
Model year	1969
Base engine	250 cu-in inline six, 155 hp V8 options 327 (235 hp), 350 (255/300 hp), 396 (265 hp), 427 (335/390/425 hp) New for 1969 350 V8; formal 'sheer look'…

About This Guide

This is the RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide for the 1969 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.

1969 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 1969 Unique

1969 brought formal 'sheer look' styling — a notchback Sport Coupe roofline, a more upright grille, and squared-off proportions. The wagon became the Kingswood. Standard 327 power rose to 235 horsepower, and the new 350 cubic-inch V8 arrived at 255 or 300 horsepower.

The big-block story expanded: the 396 dropped to 265 horsepower in base tune, while the 427 came at 335 or 390 horsepower — and the L72 425-hp 427 was available in all B-bodies, making 1969 the high-water mark for big-block choice in a base Impala. Only about 8,700 six-cylinder Impalas were built against 768,000 V8s.

Safety equipment grew: headrests became standard and the locking steering-column ignition arrived early in the model year. The Powerglide paired with the 327 and 350; the TH400 came with all V8s.

Year-to-year changes at a glance.

- Formal 'sheer look' styling with notchback Sport Coupe; wagon becomes Kingswood.
- New 350 V8 (255/300 hp); standard 327 up to 235 hp; 396 at 265; 427 at 335/390 plus L72 425.
- Locking column ignition and headrests; 4-speed manual's final year.

4. VIN Decoding

1969 Chevrolet Impala

1965-1971 full-size Chevrolet VIN: division, series (63 = Impala six, 64 = Impala V8), body code, year digit, plant letter, sequence. Drivetrain parts carry partial VIN stampings.

Position
Meaning
Codes / Notes
1
Division
1 = Chevrolet
2-3
Series
63 = Impala six, 64 = Impala V8
4-5
Body style
Body code
6
Model year
9 = 1969

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