

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1961 Chevrolet Impala SS Restoration Guide

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.

Get the full guide: <https://restoreessentials.com/product/RE-GD-CHEVROLET-IMPALA-SS-1961>

RestorationEssentials — instant PDF download after checkout.



RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1961 Chevrolet Impala SS

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Model year	1961 — the FIRST Impala SS; performance package on the Impala
Transmissions	3-speed manual, 4-speed manual (Borg-Warner T-10), Powerglide
Production	453 SS cars (reported); ~142 with the 409 (reported) Single-year coverage. Factory-correct specifications. No guesswork — where sources conflict,...

restorationessentials.polsia.app

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

SAMPLE EXCERPT — full guide available at the link on the cover sheet



About This Guide

This is the RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide for the 1961 Chevrolet Impala SS 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 1961 Chevrolet Impala SS

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 Impala SS

The Impala began in 1958 as Chevrolet's top full-size trim, and by 1960 it was America's best-selling car. In February 1961 Chevrolet did something it had never done: it offered a factory performance package for



size car — the Super Sport. The 1961 SS was RPO 240, a \$53.80 performance package (reported figure) on the Impala sport coupe and convertible that could be ordered with any Impala engine, from the 235 six to the brand-new 409 V8. The package brought heavy-duty suspension and brakes, quicker steering, spinner wheel covers, narrow-band whitewall tires, and a tachometer. Just 453 were built — the rarest SS of them all.

For 1962-1963 the SS became RPO Z03, a \$156 (reported) appearance-and-trim package available with any Impala engine — six-cylinder included — on the sport coupe and convertible. The formula worked: 99,311 SS cars in 1962. But it also created the hobby's enduring confusion: an SS badge on a 1962-63 car proves trim, not performance. The 409-powered SS cars (380 and 409 hp in 1962) are the legends; the six-cylinder SS cars are honest, pretty cruisers.

For 1964-1967 the SS became a separate series with its own VIN prefix — 13/14 in 1964, 168 in 1965-66, 166 in 1967 — and production exploded: 185,325 in 1964, 243,114 in 1965. The 1965 redesign brought the 396; 1966 brought the 427. For 1968 the SS returned to RPO Z03 option status (38,210 built), and for 1967-1969 the SS427 (RPO Z24) offered the 427 as the top performance option. After 1969, the Impala SS was gone — it would not return until 1994.

The restoration truth about the Impala SS: it was often trim and appearance as much as performance. Never describe every SS as a maximum-performance car — verify the engine by suffix code, casting numbers, and documentation, and price the car for what it was born with, not what its badges suggest.

3. What Makes the 1961 Unique

In February 1961, Chevrolet invented the Super Sport — RPO 240, a \$53.80 package on the Impala sport coupe (the famous 'bubble top') and convertible that could be ordered with any engine, from the 235 six to the brand-new 409 V8. The package brought heavy-duty suspension and brakes, quicker steering, spinner wheel covers, narrow-band whitewall tires, a column-mounted tachometer, and SS badging. Just 453 buyers checked the box.

Of those 453, a reported 142 ordered the 409 — the engine that made the SS a legend before the car was a year old. The 1961 409 was a single four-barrel, 11.25:1, 360-horsepower animal with approximately 409 lb-ft of torque, and it turned the full-size Chevrolet into a drag-strip contender overnight.

The 1961 SS is the rarest and most historically significant Impala SS of the 1961-1969 era — and the hardest to authenticate, because the SS was a package, not a series: the VIN carries standard Impala 1961 Chevrolet Impala SS

codes (11837/11867), and only paperwork and stampings prove the real thing. This guide teaches you exactly how.

Year-to-year changes at a glance.

■ **THE RAREST SS:** 453 total — the lowest SS production of the entire 1961-1969 era. Any 1961 SS claim demands extraordinary documentation; the market prices real cars accordingly and punishes fakes severely.

■ **THE 409'S DEBUT:** The 1961 409 (360 hp, 11.25:1, 4.3125 x 3.50-inch bore/stroke, single Carter AFB four-barrel) is the engine that made the legend. Verify by the block casting number, casting date, and suffix code — a 1961 409 block is one of the most valuable Chevrolet castings in existence.

■ **PACKAGE, NOT SERIES:** The 1961 VIN reads 11837 (sport coupe) or 11867 (convertible) — standard Impala V8 codes. There is no SS digit anywhere. Authentication runs through the build sheet, dealer invoice, Protect-O-Plate (not available in 1961 — the system began in 1965), and the drivetrain stampings.

■ **BUBBLE-TOP BODY:** The 1961 sport coupe's thin-pillar 'bubble top' roofline is one-year-only and iconic. Roof, glass, and trim are 1961-specific — verify before buying.