

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1974 Dodge Ramcharger Restoration Guide

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1974 Dodge Ramcharger Restoration Guide

Model Years 1974

Model year	1974 - Ramcharger year 1 of 8 (1974-1981 span)
Generation	First (removable roof)
Drive	4WD only (AW100) - no 2WD Ramcharger this year
Roof	No roof, dealer fabric top, or optional removable steel roof
Identifiers	Half-doors with roof-attached pillars = built up to June 10, 1974. Full pickup-style doors = after the split. This is the easiest first-year tell in the whole Ramcharger run.

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

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How This Guide Works

This is a **single-year restoration** guide for the 1974 Dodge Ramcharger - one year, covered on its own because that is how these trucks were built and how they must be restored. Specifications were checked against the marque model history, Hagerty's and MotorTrend's published histories, and factory literature. Where sources disagree, this guide prints the disagreement instead of guessing.

Scope. Covers the 1974 Ramcharger (AW100) only - the 4WD launch year, including the early/late door split. The Plymouth Trail Duster is mechanically identical and shares the procedures; its badging differs.

Where 1974 sits in the run

- **Coming in:** The Dodge Town Wagon era ends; the Bronco, Blazer, and Scout own the segment Dodge is entering.
- **Leaving:** 1975 adds the two-wheel-drive Ramcharger, and a Ramcharger wins the Sno*Drift rally outright.

Platform Snapshot

Fact	Detail
Model year	1974
Platform	Chrysler AD, shortened pickup chassis
Wheelbase	106 in (9 in shorter than the short-bed pickup)
Drive	4WD only (AW100) - no 2WD Ramcharger this year
Roof	No roof, dealer fabric top, or optional removable steel roof
Transfer case (4WD)	NP203 full-time (standard)
Grille / front tell	1974 pickup-line grille; round headlights
Engines	225 slant six, 318 LA V8, 360 LA V8, 400 B V8, 440 RB V8
Twin	Plymouth Trail Duster (1974-1981 run)

The 1974 Register - What Makes a 1974 a 1974

- Launch year. Development codename: 'Rhino.' Built on a shortened AD pickup chassis - 106-inch wheelbase.
- Four-wheel drive only; there is no factory 2WD 1974 Ramcharger.
- The half-door split: trucks built up to June 10, 1974 carry door pillars attached to the removable roof, so removing the top leaves half-doors. After that build date the roof was redesigned to use normal pickup-style doors. The build date on the tag decides which truck you have.
- Roof menu: no roof at all, a dealer-installed fabric top with roll-up windows, or the optional removable steel roof with a flip-up rear tailgate window.
- Spartan standard equipment: only the driver's seat is standard. The passenger seat and rear bench are options (the passenger seat stays optional through 1976).
- Insulated center console - an ice chest - is a factory option and a prized find today.
- Five-engine menu, 225 six through the 440 big block, with the NP203 full-time case standard.



VIN, Fender Tag, and Build Date

The VIN, the frame stamp, and the fender tag tell you what the truck is; the broadcast sheet tells you how it was built. On this model the build date itself can be a specification - 1974's door split turns on it - so read the tag before the truck, every time.

Engines: The 1974 Menu

All ratings are SAE net as published for the year. The fender tag and block stampings are the authority for the truck in front of you.

Engine	Output (net)	Notes
225 slant six	Listed standard engine	See the conflict note below
318 LA V8	150 hp	Given as the 4WD base engine in some references
360 LA V8	Small block	Optional
400 B V8	Big block	Optional
440 RB V8	225 hp	Top engine

Engine note. Base-engine conflict, printed honestly: the marque history lists the 225 slant six as the standard engine, while other references give the 318 as the base engine on the 4WD truck (with the 225 as the 2WD base once 2WD exists). Both accounts are in print; the fender tag of the individual truck is the only authority that matters.

Restoring the 1974 engines

- 318/360 LA small blocks: the survivors - most trucks, best parts support. Keep the 360's balance hardware with the 360.
- Big blocks (1974-78): verify the radiator is the correct big-block unit and the manifolds are sound; claims need paperwork.
- 225 slant six: simple and durable; check the manifold and carburetor first.
- Casting dates should precede the build date by weeks.

Transmissions and Transfer Cases

Unit	Type	Application
3-speed manual	Column/floor by build	Base
4-speed manual (NP435)	Floor-shift, granny low	The 4WD favorite
TorqueFlite 727	3-speed automatic	Optional across the line

NP203 full-time four-wheel drive, standard. The full-time Dana 44 front axle has no provision for locking hubs and a front wheel bearing design with a documented weak reputation - budget a bearing and joint inspection on any survivor, and price the aftermarket part-time conversion kits as what they are: modifications, not restorations.

Axles, Suspension, and Brakes

- Leaf springs at both ends - the Ramcharger kept them its whole life, and the articulation is part of the appeal.