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1973 Ford Galaxie Restoration Guide

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1973 Ford Galaxie

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

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About This Guide

This is the RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide for the 1973 Ford Galaxie 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 door data plate 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, plates 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: Ford

Ford Motor Company was incorporated in 1903 by Henry Ford and a group of Detroit investors. The 1908 Model T put the world on wheels — more than 15 million built — and the moving assembly line at Highland Park (1913) redefined manufacturing itself. The 1927 Model A and the 1932 flathead V8, the first affordable V8 in an inexpensive car, cemented Ford's place in the American garage and created a performance culture around the brand that never left.

After World War II, Ford modernized under Henry Ford II and the 'Whiz Kids.' The 1949 Ford saved the company; the 1955 Thunderbird created the personal-luxury segment; and the 1959 Galaxie — named for the Space Race — gave Ford's top full-size trim a name of its own. By the early 1960s Ford was all-in on 'Total Performance': the 1963½ Galaxie fastback shaped in a wind tunnel for NASCAR, the 427-powered factory lightweight Galaxies, and the 1964½ Mustang that changed the industry overnight.

The full-size Ford was the company's foundation through all of it — the car Ford dealers lived on. For 1965 Ford gave its big cars a full-perimeter frame, coil-spring suspension at all four corners, and the quiet, solid road manners that made the 1965-1968 generation the best-selling big Fords ever built. The 1966 Galaxie 500 7-Litre and the 1967 facelift carried the performance torch; the 1968 restyle, the 1969 redesign, and the 1971 redesign kept the full-size line current through the end of the muscle era.

For the restorer, Ford's scale is both blessing and curse. Mechanical parts were made by the million, so FE and 385-series engine components, Toploader and C6 transmissions, and 9-inch rear-axle parts are 1973 Ford Galaxie

easy to find — but year-specific trim and sheet metal were made for one model year, and the difference between a 1967 and a 1968 fender is the difference between a correct car and an expensive mistake. The door data plate decodes the car's born-with configuration, and for 1967-and-later cars the Marti Report (built from Ford's production database) confirms it.



History: Ford Galaxie

Ford named its top full-size trim for the Space Race: the Galaxie debuted for 1959 as the flagship trim of the Fairlane 500, and the name stuck. For 1960 the Galaxie became a standalone series, and the semi-fastback Starliner hardtop — shaped with NASCAR in mind — gave Ford a superspeedway body two years before the famous 1963½ fastback.

The early 1960s were Ford's 'Total Performance' years, and the full-size car carried the banner. The 390 arrived for 1961 in 300, 330, and 375-horsepower forms; the 406 replaced the hi-po 390 for 1962 with 385 or 405 horsepower; and for 1963 the 427 — 410 horsepower with one four-barrel, 425 with two — turned the Galaxie into a NASCAR homologation special. The mid-year Sports Hardtop fastback, developed in the wind tunnel, was the roofline that made the 427 aerodynamically viable on the superspeedways. For 1964 the Galaxie got a new body on the proven chassis and the 289 small-block joined the lineup. Then came the clean-sheet 1965 redesign: new body, full-perimeter frame, and the debut of the Galaxie 500 LTD — the affordable personal-luxury flagship that invented its segment. The 1966 Galaxie 500 7-Litre paired the new 428 V8 (345 horsepower, 462 lb-ft) with buckets, console, and badging for Ford's factory answer to the personal-luxury performance car; 1967 brought a facelift and federally mandated safety equipment.

The 1968 restyle, the 1969 redesign, and the 1971 redesign kept the full-size Ford current through the end of the muscle era — the 429 joined for 1969, the XL bowed out after 1970, and the 351/400/429/460 range carried the line into the 1970s. Through every generation, the Galaxie was the car Ford dealers lived on: the volume full-size line against which every restoration standard for these cars is measured.

3. What Makes the 1973 Unique

The 1973 Galaxie wore the federally mandated 5-mph bumper treatment — bigger, heavier bumper systems front and rear that changed the car's face and its weight. The 1973-only bumper hardware, brackets, and filler panels are restoration items in their own right: verify part numbers against the 1973 catalog, because the energy-absorbing hardware is year-specific.

The engine range went V8-only for 1973: the 240 six and the 302 were gone. The base engine was the 351 2V with the SelectShift automatic, with the 400, 429, and the new 460 as options. There is no factory six-cylinder or manual-transmission 1973 full-size Ford — any car presented as such is misidentified. The 460 joined the full-size line for 1973 at 218 net horsepower — the largest-displacement regular-production engine in the range (4.36-inch bore, 3.85-inch stroke). The A-code VIN is the proof of a 1973 Ford Galaxie

born-with 460 car; the 385-series casting discipline applies exactly as on the 429.

Net ratings continued: 351 at 156, 400 at 163 (some sources cite 171 — see Conflicts), 429 at 197, and 460 at 218 net horsepower. The 400's two published figures reflect application and source differences — report the conflict rather than choosing.

Emissions equipment was now a full system — EGR, revised carburetion, retarded timing curves, and underhood plumbing that must be present and correct for a factory-correct restoration. The 1973 emissions hardware is year- and engine-specific; verify part numbers against the 1973 shop manual.

The 1973-only front and rear bumper systems, with their impact hardware and fillers, are the visual signature of the year — and a common source of incorrect parts, because earlier bumpers bolt on with persuasion but are not correct. Verify the bumper part numbers and the energy-absorbing brackets.

Inside, 1973 trim and upholstery are one-year-only within the generation. Order soft trim by exact year — '1971-73' is a catalog convenience, not a factory fact, for several interior pieces.

The SelectShift Cruise-O-Matic was the only transmission — C4, FMX, and C6 by application. Verify the