

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1958 Ford Thunderbird Restoration Guide

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1958 Ford Thunderbird Restoration Guide

Model Years 1958

Model year	1958
Generation	Square Bird (second generation)
Engine	352 cu in FE V8
Output	300 hp
Transmission	3-speed manual or Cruise-O-Matic automatic
Production	37,892 (shortened model year)

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 1958 Ford Thunderbird - one model year, given its own guide because the year changes are the restoration: specifications, finishes and procedures that differ from the year before and the year after are called out in the 1958 Register below, and shared platform material is labeled as shared. Ford factory shop manuals 1958-1966; Vintage Thunderbird Club marque references; period road tests; Motor Trend Car of the Year record.

Scope. This guide covers the 1958 Ford Thunderbird as built. Neighboring years appear only where a change boundary must be drawn - a part or procedure belonging to another year is named as such, never silently applied to this one.

Platform Snapshot

Fact	Detail
Model year	1958
Engine (standard)	352 cu in FE V8
Output	300 hp
Transmission	3-speed manual or Cruise-O-Matic automatic
Chassis	Unibody; 113 in wheelbase
Original list price	Hardtop \$3,631; convertible +\$284 class
Production	37,892 (shortened model year)

The 1958 Register - What Makes a 1958 a 1958

- GENERATION BREAK - Square Bird begins. The two-seat Thunderbird is replaced by a four-seat personal-luxury car on Ford's new unibody: 11 inches more wheelbase and roughly 800 lb more car than the 1957 two-seater. Almost nothing from the Little Bird carries over.
- Hardtop first (January 1958); the convertible follows in June 1958 with a top that folds completely into the trunk under a flush deck - the unbroken trunk line is a 1958 engineering signature.
- Bucket seats are standard - the first American production car so equipped - with a console between them.
- Motor Trend named the 1958 Thunderbird Car of the Year, the first individual model line (rather than a whole brand) to take the honor.
- Quad headlamps, prominent tailfins and a bold chrome grille define the Square Bird face; the hood scoop is decorative.

Engines - the 1958 Specification

Engine	Output	Notes
352 FE V8	300 hp	Standard and (at launch) only engine; new FE big-block family

The 352 is the FE family's Thunderbird debut. The 430 MEL appears in Thunderbird documentation from 1959 (see the 1959 guide) - some references show late-1958 430 fitments; this guide does not assert them for a standard 1958 build [see corrections file].



FE service practice (hydraulic lifters, shaft-mounted rockers) follows the 1958 Ford shop manual - it is not small-block Ford practice.

Year-Correct Procedures

Unibody first: on a Square Bird the body IS the structure. Rocker, torque-box and floor integrity checks precede any cosmetic decision - the inspection map differs completely from the body-on-frame 1955-57 cars.

The convertible's hydraulic top mechanism and its fully-retracting deck operation are 1958 systems to service as a system - cylinders, pump and sequencing together.

Finishes and Trim - 1958 Only

- Square Bird identification is the squared formal roofline (hardtop), quad lamps and the first-year grille - the extended roofline profile Elwood Engel drew became a Ford-wide theme.
- Interior: standard buckets and console in the year's trim combinations - a bench-seat '1958 Thunderbird' is not a factory configuration.

Restoration Sequence Notes

- Photograph and record the car's tags, casting numbers and as-found trim before teardown - on a single-year restoration the as-found evidence is what the finished car is judged against.
- Verify every year-locked item in the 1958 Register before ordering parts; the commonest defect in this model's restorations is a neighboring year's part fitted without malice and without record.
- Keep a build file: sources consulted, measurements taken, and every substitution made, however small.

Recommended for this restoration

Shop exact-fit supplies on Amazon

- Ford FE 352 390 428 engine rebuild gasket set
- 1958-1966 Ford Thunderbird weatherstrip kit
- Ford Thunderbird sequential turn signal sequencer

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Sources Consulted

Ford factory shop manuals 1958-1966; Vintage Thunderbird Club marque references; period road tests; Motor Trend Car of the Year record. Where sources disagreed, the disagreement is recorded in this guide's corrections file and the disputed figure is not asserted.

Thank you for restoring a 1958 Ford Thunderbird the way it was built - one year at a time. - RestorationEssentials