

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

Fox Body Mustang 1979 1993 5 0I V8

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RESTORATION ESSENTIALS

Fox-Body Mustang

1979–1993

5.0L V8: The Volume Car

GT and LX 5.0 — the cars that defined a generation of street performance

Platform guide · Model years 1979–1993

KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

- About 2.6 million Fox-body Mustangs were built from 1979 through 1993 — the highest-volume Mustang generation ever.
- The 5.0L High Output V8 grew from 157 hp in 1982 to 225 hp and 300 lb-ft of torque by 1987.
- Two visual eras: the "four-eyed" cars (1979–1986, quad rectangular headlights) and the aero-nose cars (1987–1993).
- The 8th digit of the VIN is the engine code: E = 5.0L HO for 1987–1993. Check it before you believe any badge.
- HO firing order is 1-3-7-2-6-5-4-8 — different from the older 302 order. Wire it wrong and it will run, badly.
- V8 cars got the 8.8-inch rear axle from 1986 on; transmissions were the Borg-Warner T-5 5-speed or the AOD 4-speed automatic.
- This guide speaks two languages, labeled throughout: STOCK-CORRECT (how Ford built it) and PERFORMANCE-SMART (what the aftermarket learned).
- Never pay GT money for an LX wearing GT badges. The VIN and buck tag do not lie — this guide shows you how to read them.

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

Why the 5.0L Fox is the volume car

If the 1964½–1973 Mustang was the car that invented the pony car, the 1979–1993 Fox-body was the car that saved it. Ford built roughly 2.6 million of them — nearly as many as the entire 1964½–1973 run — on the humble Fox platform it shared with the Fairmont. They were cheap, light (around 3,000–3,300 pounds depending on year and body), rear-wheel drive, and blessed with an engine bay that swallows a small-block with room to spare.

The 5.0L High Output V8, introduced mid-1982, is the reason these cars matter. It arrived at 157 horsepower when 150 was a lot, grew to 175 with a four-barrel in 1983, hit 210 in the last carbureted year of 1985, and reached 225 horsepower with 300 lb-ft of torque when fuel injection and better heads arrived for 1987. Lightweight, inexpensive, and endlessly modifiable, the 5.0 Mustang revived the Mustang legend for a new generation — and created the largest owner-restorer community of any car in this catalog. Corral.net alone counts more than 208,000 members, a bigger crowd than most muscle-era forums.

Be honest about this crowd: they restomod as much as they restore. A concours-correct 1989 LX 5.0 exists, and its owner deserves exact answers — but the far more common project is a driver-quality car getting sensible performance upgrades. This guide serves both owners. Sections marked **STOCK-CORRECT** tell you how Ford built it: VIN decoding, date codes, original finishes, casting numbers. Sections marked **PERFORMANCE-SMART** tell you what thirty years of owner experience proved works: the bolt-on path, the traps, the judgment calls. The two are never blurred. When a modification costs you originality points, this guide says so.

Year by year: what changed, 1979–1993 — STOCK-CORRECT

The Fox Mustang ran fifteen model years with one fundamental split: 1979–1986 "four-eyed" cars with four rectangular sealed-beam headlights, and 1987–1993 aero-nose cars with flush composite headlights. Within those eras, the 5.0 evolved relentlessly. Know your year cold — parts, wiring, and value all hinge on it.

1979 — The Fox debut. Engines were the 2.3L four, a 2.3L turbo, a 2.8L V6, and a 140-hp 302 2-barrel V8. The Indy Pace Car replica (official pace car of the 1979 Indianapolis 500) gave the new car its first collectible variant, and the Cobra appearance package (decals and spoilers, no "II") sat at the top of the line. Build quality on very early cars is notoriously spotty — check everything twice on a '79.

1980–1981 — The 302 gives way to the 4.2L (255-cubic-inch) V8, rated around 115–119 hp — the malaise-era low point. The 2.3L turbo briefly out-powered the V8, an embarrassment Ford would spend the decade erasing.

1982 — The GT name returns, and with it the 5.0L High Output V8 at 157 hp and 240 lb-ft, introduced mid-model-year. This is the car that restarted the performance story. The 4.2L soldiered on in non-GT cars at 111 hp.

1983 — The convertible returns for the first time since 1973. The 5.0 grows to 175 hp and 245 lb-ft with a Holley four-barrel, and the 5-speed manual (T-5) becomes available. The 3.8L V6 replaces the inline six and 2.8L V6.

1984 — Carryover 175-hp 5.0 for the GT. The big stories this year — the 20th Anniversary GT350 and the SVO — are covered in the companion Fox special-variants guide. Note: 1984 was the last year for the carbureted 5.0's early cam and head combination; 1985 changes were substantial.

1985 — The high-water mark of the carbureted 5.0: 210 hp at 4,400 rpm and 270 lb-ft at 3,200 rpm, with 8.4:1 compression. Ford fitted a roller camshaft, revised lifters, a Holley 4180C four-barrel, and stainless tubular exhaust headers. Last year for a carburetor on the Mustang GT — and the last year of the four-eyed nose.

1986 — Fuel injection arrives: 200 hp at 4,000 rpm and 285 lb-ft at 3,000 rpm, compression up to 9.2:1. The E6SE high-swirl heads, a long-runner aluminum intake, and a true dual exhaust with H-pipe were new. V8 cars got the 8.8-inch rear axle, replacing the 7.5. The federally mandated center high-mount stop lamp (third brake light) appears.

Single-year caution: 1986-only E6 heads on flat-top pistons *without* valve reliefs — head and cam swaps on a 1986 short-block demand piston-to-valve clearance checks that later years don't.

1987 — The aero restyle: flush headlights, new front and rear fascias, revised interior. The 5.0 jumps to 225 hp at 4,200 rpm and 300 lb-ft at 3,200 rpm with E7TE heads (borrowed from the F-Series truck line), 9.0:1 compression, and forged pistons. This is the engine most people picture when they say "5.0."

1988 — Mechanical carryover. California cars got mass-air metering; the other 49 states stayed speed-density. If originality matters, know which system your car was born with — the wiring and computer are different.

1989 — Mass-air for all 50 states. Advertised output stayed 225 hp / 300 lb-ft. This is the sweet spot year for many buyers: aero nose, mass-air, forged pistons, and pre-airbag simplicity.

1990 — Driver's-side airbag becomes standard, with a new steering wheel. Ratings hold at 225/300 in Ford's advertising (factory literature of the era shows some year-to-year rating drift between 220 and 225 — same engine, changing test procedures).

1991 — GTs got 16-inch "pony" wheels. Otherwise a carryover year.

1992 — Last year of the forged pistons in the 5.0 HO. If you're buying a '92 as a performance starting point, the bottom end is the desirable one.

1993 — Final Fox year. The standard 5.0 was re-rated at 205 hp / 275 lb-ft under revised procedures — mechanically the same 225-hp engine. The headline was the SVT Cobra (see the special-variants guide): GT40 heads, Cobra intake, 235 hp. Hypereutectic pistons replaced forgings in the standard 5.0.

Reading the car: VIN, door label, and buck tag — STOCK-CORRECT

Buy the car the paperwork describes, not the car the badges describe. Every Fox Mustang carries three identity documents: the VIN plate (driver's side dash, visible through the windshield), the door certification label (driver's door jamb), and the buck tag (stamped metal tag on the radiator support, added as the body moved down the line). A GT that VINs as an LX 2.3L is a clone — price it as one.

VIN positions that matter

All Fox Mustangs were built at Dearborn, Michigan (plant code F), and VINs begin 1FA (Ford Motor Company, USA, passenger car).

Position	Meaning	Key codes
1–3	Manufacturer	1FA = Ford, USA, passenger car
4	Restraint system	Varies by year (airbag cars differ)
5–7	Line, series, body	See body table below
8	Engine	E = 5.0L HO (1987–93) ; M = 5.0L (1985–86, verified on 1985 GT production VINs); D = 5.0L Cobra (1993); T = 2.3L Turbo SVO
9	Check digit	0–9 or X
10	Model year	D=1983, E=1984, F=1985, G=1986, H=1987, J=1988, K=1989, L=1990, M=1991, N=1992, P=1993
11	Assembly plant	F = Dearborn (all Fox Mustangs)
12–17	Consecutive unit number	Sequence starting at 100001

Body codes (positions 5–7), verified examples: 1993 — P40 = LX notchback coupe, P41 = LX hatchback, P42 = GT/Cobra hatchback, P44 = LX convertible, P45 = GT convertible. 1987 — P42 = GT hatchback (e.g., 1FABP42E...), P45 = GT convertible. 1985 — P28 = 3-door hatchback (GT and SVO), P27 = convertible. So a 1987