

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

Automotive Restoration Master Checklist

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.

The full guide: <https://restoreessentials.com/product/RE-GD-MASTER-CHECKLIST>

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RESTORATION ESSENTIALS

Master Restoration Checklist

The bumper-to-bumper checklist for 1953–1973
American muscle & classic cars

12	phases, teardown to final inspection
101	hands-on checkpoints with sign-off boxes
1	binder-ready system: print it, check it, file it

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How to use this checklist

Print it, put it in a binder, and work it phase by phase. Each checkpoint has a box — check it off only when the work is actually done and verified, not when it's 'close enough.'

The checklist follows the order a real restoration runs: assess, plan, tear down, body, paint, chassis, drivetrain, electrical, interior, reassembly, first start, final inspection. Some phases overlap in a busy shop; the order still keeps you from painting before the metalwork is proven.

Write dates and initials next to completed phases. When the car is done, this checked-off document goes in the binder with your receipts and photos — it's part of the car's provenance and value.

One rule covers everything: **when in doubt, stop and verify.** The most expensive mistakes in restoration are the ones discovered two phases too late.

PHASE 1 OF 12

ASSESSMENT & DOCUMENTATION

Do this before a single wrench turns. Everything downstream depends on what you record now.

- ☐ Photograph the car from all four corners, roof, underhood, trunk, interior, and undercarriage — minimum 100 photos, dated.
- ☐ Record the VIN, cowl/fender tag data, engine pad stamp, transmission tag, and axle code. Photograph every stamping in place.
- ☐ Decode all tags and establish numbers-matching status **before** disassembly.
- ☐ Photograph every factory sticker, inspection mark, chalk mark, and crayon notation — these are restoration gold.
- ☐ Grade overall condition on a 1–6 scale and write it down. This sets the target: driver, show, or concours.
- ☐ Check for prior accident damage: uneven panel gaps, overspray lines, welded seams, misaligned frame horns.
- ☐ Map every rust area on a body diagram. Probe with an awl — distinguish surface rust from perforation.
- ☐ Inspect the five rust magnets: floors, trunk floor, rockers, lower quarters, cowl and windshield channels.
- ☐ Start a build binder now: one section per system, plastic sleeves for every receipt.
- ☐ Take a compression test and record the numbers — baseline engine health before teardown.
- ☐ Confirm the title is clear and transferable into your name **before** spending a dollar on parts.
- ☐ Note the car's build date versus part date codes — a two-month spread is normal; two years is a red flag.

***Shop tip:** Bill's rule of thumb: the camera is the cheapest tool in the shop. You will never regret taking too many photos.*