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## **1969 Shelby GT350 Restoration Guide**

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

# 1969 Shelby Gt350

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

## Key facts at a glance

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### Production

1,279 (1,085 SportsRoofs, 194 convertibles) Build  
Dearborn base cars completed under Ford/A.O. Smith  
control Identifier 9F02M48xxxx / 9F03M48xxxx —...

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*Single-year coverage. Factory-correct specifications. No guesswork.*

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### About This Guide

This is the RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide for the 1969 Shelby GT350 — 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 fender-tag (or 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, tags 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: Shelby

Shelby American was founded in 1962 by Carroll Shelby — Texas chicken farmer, champion racing driver, and the most forceful personality in American performance history. His formula was disarmingly simple: take a lightweight European or American chassis and install far more American V8 than anyone thought sensible.

The legend started with the Cobra: a British AC Ace body stuffed with a Ford 260, then 289, then the all-conquering 427. When Ford needed a racing version of the Mustang for SCCA B-Production, Shelby got the contract — and the GT350 was born: a 1965 Mustang fastback transformed at Shelby's Venice (later Los Angeles) facility with a 306-horsepower 289, suspension rework, and competition intent. The 1967 GT500 added big-block FE power to the formula.

From 1968 the Shelybs were built by Ford (at the A.O. Smith facility in Michigan) rather than by Shelby American in California — a distinction that matters for correctness, because the 1968-1970 cars carry Ford engineering numbers and assembly practices alongside Shelby serial numbers. Production ran through 1970, when unsold 1969 models were re-VIN'd as 1970s.

Carroll Shelby's name is on more performance milestones than any other American's — the Cobra, the GT350/GT500, the GT40 program he ran for Ford, the Dodge performance cars of the 1980s, the Viper's spiritual lineage. Shelby Mustangs are blue-chip collector cars, and factory-correct restoration is supported by the Shelby American Automobile Club (SAAC) registry, which documents individual cars.

1969 Shelby GT350

## 2. Model History: Shelby GT350

The GT350 was born in 1965 as Ford's answer to SCCA B-Production racing: a Mustang fastback transformed at Shelby American's Venice, California facility with a 306-horsepower solid-lifter 289, a reworked suspension, and competition hardware. The street cars that followed made the formula famous — a small, light Mustang with far more engine and handling than its price suggested.



...ought the first Hertz GT350H rental cars and a more street-oriented package, and 1967 moved the cross onto the redesigned Mustang body shell. The 1967 cars were the last built by Shelby American in Los Angeles; from 1968, base cars came from Ford's Metuchen plant and were completed by the A.O. Smith facility in Michigan — a change that shows up in assembly details and engineering numbers. The engines tell the decade's story: the high-winding 289 gave way to the 302 in 1968, and 1969 brought both the new SportsRoof body treatment and the 351 Windsor V8. When the 1969 model year ended with unsold cars on hand, Ford had Kar Kraft update them with new 1970 VIN plates, hood stripes, and a front spoiler, and sold them as 1970 models — the end of the original Shelby Mustang line.

### 3. What Makes the 1969 Unique

1969 is the full redesign year: the Shelby wears its own long fiberglass nose and front fenders, a five-duct NASA-style hood, side scoops, a rear spoiler treatment, sequential tail lamps, and a center-exit exhaust — a Shelby-specific SportsRoof and convertible treatment that shares almost no front sheet metal with the Mustang. Completion remained under the Ford/A.O. Smith arrangement that began in 1968.

The new engine is the M-code 351 Windsor four-barrel — 4.00 x 3.50 inches, 10.7:1 compression, rated at 290 horsepower (gross) with 385 lb-ft of torque. The Ford VIN engine code is M, and Shelby reserved the 48xxxx consecutive-unit block at Dearborn: verified examples run 9F02M480927 and 9F02M481107 (SportsRoofs) and 9F03M481966 (convertible).

1,279 GT350s were built — 1,085 SportsRoofs and 194 convertibles — including 152 GT350H cars for Hertz (DSO 842650), continuing the Shelby rental-car tradition. A verified Marti report on a 1969 GT350 SportsRoof shows the details a restorer should expect on the paperwork: body 63C Shelby 2-Door Fastback, paint 65 Acapulco Blue (Ford #3077-A), axle code R (3.25 Traction-Lok), and transmission code 6 (four-speed close ratio).

The door data plate uses Ford numeric paint codes (65 = Acapulco Blue) alongside the Shelby letter codes — the Marti report cross-references both, and the tag, the VIN, and the registry must all agree. Year-to-year changes at a glance.

- Shelby-specific SportsRoof body: long fiberglass nose and fenders, five-duct NASA-style hood.
- 351 Windsor V8 replaced the 302; 290 hp (gross).
- Sequential tail lamps; center-exit exhaust; rear spoiler treatment.

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- Dearborn base cars; Shelby-reserved 48xxxx VIN block.
- 152 Hertz GT350H cars (DSO 842650).
- 1,279 built (1,085 SportsRoofs, 194 convertibles).

### 4. VIN Decoding

1969 Shelybs carry the Dearborn Ford VIN with Shelby reserving the 48xxxx consecutive-unit block. Verified examples show the Ford VIN; check the fender apron for the Shelby serial tag and confirm the numbering format against the SAAC registry.

Position

Meaning

Codes / Notes

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Model year

1969