

# HITTING THE ROAD

10 TIPS FOR DAILY DRIVING YOUR CLASSIC CHEVY MUSCLE CAR



**Depending on your age**, you may remember when a 1969 Camaro was “just another car” on the road. It was undoubtedly a good time to be a child or young adult because the streets were full of muscle cars. The fact of the matter is that the cars we now cherish were likely used for general transportation for their first 10 years of service. Sure, the high-end cars with rare option packages may have lived a privileged life, but a high percentage of Camaro, Chevelle, Nova, Impala, and other models were daily drivers. Fast-forward a few decades and the majority of car guys aren’t taking full advantage of their vintage iron due to fears of scratching the paint, being on the side of the road with a mechanical gremlin, or dealing with rush hour traffic. This results in a bunch of old cars sitting in garages, waiting for the next cruise night to come around. An occasional cruiser is perfectly acceptable, but wouldn’t it be cool to drive your classic Chevy to work on a regular basis?

Admittedly, we’re all spoiled by GM’s excellent longevity with the LS family of engines. Let’s use the 1999-’14 Chevy Silverado as an example. If one is your current daily driver, then you know that the Vortec series of engines will essentially run forever with just regular oil changes. Spark plugs may last 100,000 miles, and you can typically expect to get 300,000 miles out of a 4.8L, 5.3L, or 6.0L if it has been properly maintained. This is not the case for classic Chevy applications from the 1960’s and 1970’s. It could be said that your car was “used up” if it reached 100,000 miles, and it was probably true. An old-school small-block would’ve gone through several sets of spark plugs, points, and probably a fuel pump by the time the odometer made the glorious roll back to zero. And if it survived that long, it would likely be consuming and leaking oil, and it would need the timing set replaced. It’s the ugly

truth, and it goes to show how well the LS family of engines performs in daily driving duty. Of course, we’ll touch on LS swaps in our 10 tips, but the point of our brief diatribe on vintage engines was to explain that old engines need love regularly. So, if you’re planning to keep the old 283 in service, get ready to work on it.

It isn’t just the engine that wears out—the drivetrain, suspension, braking system, and more can and will wear out, even if the car has spent the last decade in the garage. Parts fatigue can be attributed to lack of maintenance, a poor engineering design, or simply the amount of time the component has been in service. Luckily, the aftermarket support for most classic Chevy platforms is strong, allowing us to repair, replace, and upgrade our original components. We’re going to cover the top 10 items to address if you want to make the daily commute in a classic Chevy. Put these tips to work on your project and you’ll enjoy the seat time while your car stays limbered up and ready for action.

### BRAKES

The braking system needs to be number one on your checklist. If you're planning to truly daily drive a classic Chevy, it's a good idea to check all of the components. On Chevy passenger cars built before 1967, original equipment consisted of a single reservoir master cylinder, which is not ideal for daily driving. This system can fully evacuate itself, due to a leaky wheel cylinder, a split brake line, or a simple mistake like a loose bleeder screw. Companies like Classic Performance Products offer affordable conversion kits that include the necessary lines and blocks to make a dual reservoir master cylinder work with your setup.

If your car still has drum brakes, the easiest route is a disc brake conversion. Front discs and rear drums are a great combination for a budget-friendly daily driver. If you want to keep the drums all around, be sure to replace the flex hoses, as old hoses are prone to making the car dart under braking. The real takeaway here is that you can spend a couple hundred or a couple thousand bucks on an updated braking setup. Figure out what your budget allows, but always play it safe when it comes to brakes.

