



▲
Chevrolet's grille
has European
look, clean and
handsome

Fender styling is
now functional,
aids visibility



CHEVROLET V-8

Chevy's long-anticipated V-8 is here,
and it's been well worth waiting for



Chevrolet has four station wagons for 1955, either two- or four-door types being available. This one is the Bel Air Beauville

The addition of its own version of ball-joint front suspension and wider-mounted rear springs makes handling more precise ▶



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Chevrolet's three distinct lines of cars consisting of the dechromed One-Fifty series, the more decorated Two-Ten, and the fancy Bel Air provide a triple threat in the low-priced field (though it gets uncomfortably close, in the "better" models, to the medium-priced group). I tested the 162-horsepower V-8 equipped Bel Air four-door sedan. It was loaded down with Powerglide automatic transmission, power brakes, and power steering, but there's no doubt that America's number one seller has some real personality at last.

There are scads of improvements. The body and frame structure is now more closely integrated. For the first time Chevrolet has rubber-insulated body mounting pads between frame and body; these will make for much less noise. The frame side members are 14½ inches farther apart at the narrowest place and in the rear they are four inches closer together. With a good

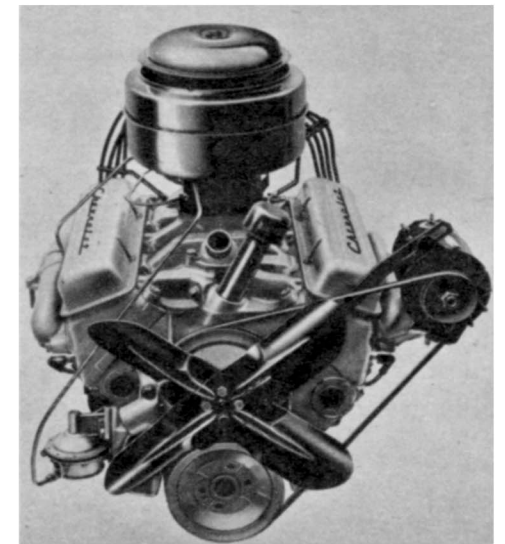
50 percent increase in twist resistance, the new frame is about 18 percent lighter—the main reason why Chevrolet for 1955 is lighter than it has been for many years.

The body, too, is stronger, and the new cowl ventilation inlets feed into what the engineers call a "plenum chamber" that actually adds strength to the forward body structure immediately aft of the hood. Chevrolet, although supposedly a small car, has always been fairly high in overall height. This is changed with hoods and rear decks more than three inches lower and overall height down 2½ inches on sedans and coupes while the recently towering station wagons are six inches lower. And, by the way, the increasing popularity of wagons has caused Chevy to introduce a new two-door model in the One-Fifty and Two-Ten series.

Remarkably improved in roadability, Chevrolet now has its own version of ball-

joint front suspension, an obvious admission that Ford's new ride and handling was more than a little responsible for the near neck-and-neck battle that raged in 1954 for the customers' bucks. In the rear the elliptical leaf springs have been lengthened nine inches and relocated outside the chassis frame side members for increased stability—something that Chevy has been short on for several years.

Wrap-around windshields, newly styled interior that sparkles with color and new fabrics and plastics, and instruments that are more easily reached indicate signs of realization, on the part of Chevy brass, that they are going to have to show substantially more improvement than they've heretofore given the customer. The driver's position is much improved and the right front fender is now visible to the driver. The hood is really not as low as it appears, and therefore, over-the-hood visibility is not as



Fan of Turbo-Fire V-8 turns at lower speed than the engine itself, a worthwhile touch

PERFORMANCE

Based on actual tests on all types of roads

Acceleration (from standing

start)to 30 MPH true speed: 4.6 seconds
to 45 MPH true speed: 7.9 seconds
to 60 MPH true speed: 13.6 seconds

Highway acceleration (with step-

down) from 50 to 80 MPH: 13.1 seconds

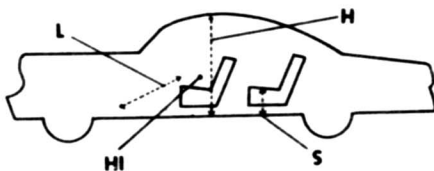
NOTE: Tests made with automatic transmission; faster times can be expected with manual shift

Maximum speedEstimated approximately 100 MPH

Weather during testsSunshine, humid

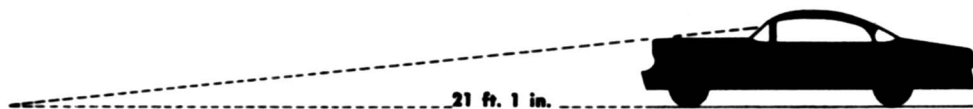
INTERIOR DIMENSIONS

In inches



Hi Hiproom62 front, 63 rear
H Headroom35-7/10 front, 35-4/10 rear
S Seat Height12-1/2 front, 13 rear
L Legroom43-1/10 front, 40-8/10 rear

VISION forward over hood (driver 5' 10")21 ft. 1 in. forward of bumper



SPECIFICATIONS

In inches unless otherwise stated

CHASSIS & BODY

Wheelbase	115
Tread	58 front, 58-8/10 rear
Length overall	195-6/10
Width overall	74
Height overall	62-1/10
Ground clearance	6-1/2
Turning circle diameter	38 feet
Steering wheel lock-to-lock	5-1/3 turns, power & mechanical
Tire size	6.70 x 15
Weight, shipping	3190 pounds (6-cylinder 3220 pounds)
Overhang	31-1/10 front, 50-9/10 rear
Brake lining area	158 square inches
Weight to brake area ratio	20.19 pounds per square inch (6-cylinder 20.38 pounds per square inch)
Weight to power ratio	19.69 pounds per BHP (6-cylinder 23.68 pounds per BHP)

ENGINE and contributing equipment

	V-8 (tested)	6-Cylinder
Cylinders, block, valves	8, V. In head	6, In-line, In head
Bore and stroke	3-3/4 x 3	3-9/16 x 3-15/16
Displacement	265 cu. in.	235.5 cu. in.
Compression ratio	8.0:1	7.5:1
Brake Horsepower (maximum)**	162 @ 4400 RPM	* 136 @ 4200 RPM
Torque	257 ft. lbs. @ 2200 RPM	209 ft. lbs. @ 2200 RPM
Carburetor	Single, 2-barrel	Single, 1-barrel
Choke	Automatic	Automatic
Fuel pump	Mechanical	Mechanical
Fuel recommended	Regular	Regular
Fuel tank capacity	16 gallons	16 gallons
Exhaust system	Single, reverse-flow muffler	Single, reverse-flow muffler
Crankcase capacity	4 qts. (add 1 for filter)	5 qts. (add 1 for filter)
Drive shaft type	Exposed	Exposed
Rear axle type	Hypoid	Hypoid
Rear axle ratios	Manual 3.7:1	Manual 3.7:1
(and available transmissions)	Overdrive 4.11:1 Automatic 3.55:1	Overdrive 4.11:1 Automatic 3.55:1
Piston speed @ maximum RPM	2200 ft. per min.	2747.75 ft. per min.
Electrical system	12 volts	12 volts
Cooling system capacity	17 qts (with heater)	17 qts. (with heater)

*6-cylinder with mechanical transmission develops 123 BHP @ 3800 RPM

6-cylinder with mechanical transmission develops 207 foot pounds Torque @ 2000 RPM

**No BHP or Torque change with mechanical transmission

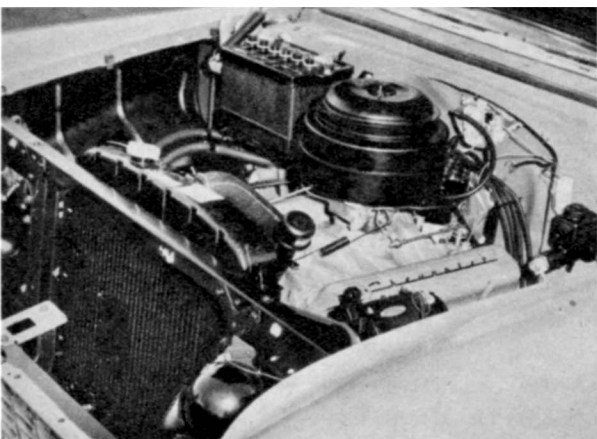
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good as I would personally prefer.

The usual manual three-speed transmission is available but now Chevrolet has added the excellent Borg-Warner overdrive which, when the dash control is pushed in, cuts in automatically anywhere above 30 mph and decreases engine rpm by a good fifth and, thus, increases engine life.

Powerglide, Chevy's automatic, is of course optional equipment and although it adds about 100 pounds of dead weight to the car, will probably be the choice of the majority. The selector lever is still on the steering column but the indicator, which lights with the instruments, is on the instrument panel just a bit lower than the speedometer. Warning blinker lights have replaced the ammeter and oil pressure gauges.

With the above mentioned features, I think Chevrolet is one of the most improved cars this year, but under the hood lies the big story: Chevy's first V-8 since the ill-fated attempt of 1917-19 to popularize such a plant. Called the "Turbo-Fire," this very



Wherry likes the 12-volt electrical system but questions small crankcase

short block engine with an unusually large bore for the overall length has a wedge-shaped combustion chamber, a two-barrel carburetor, and a moderately high 8.0 to 1 compression ratio in the standard version which develops 162 horsepower with either the mechanical or automatic shift. (Still available is the old reliable overhead valve six-cylinder engine; it has been slightly boosted in output.)

Correctly tuned, these 162 horses coupled to Powerglide will yank you from a standing start to 60 mph true speed in under 14 seconds; out on the highway where passing is sometimes a problem, you go from 50 to 80 mph in just a hair over 13 seconds. Of course, if this isn't enough performance for those with rapid ideas, there's a special Power Package which includes a four-barrel carburetor and a dual exhaust kit; this hoists the power to a neat 180 brake horsepower at 4600 revs, or 200 more crankshaft turns per minute for a lot more go. Personally, although I haven't driven the souped-up job at this writing, I'd take the four-barrel carb and the dual exhausts with the overdrive transmission. Chevy should really get up and move with this setup. The only thing I am dubious about is the four-quart crankcase in an engine of this size.

I went through cornering tests with a new appreciation for Chevrolet. Using the low range on the automatic gearbox, I finally made it through the entire 90 degree flat and very sharp turn at a full 30 mph, something the '54 Chevy would not do. Steering, though, is far too slow (5 1/3 turns lock-to-lock on either mechanical or power) and requires the driver to be quite frantic in his wheel turning. With faster steering, say 3 or even 3 1/2 turns, this new Chevrolet would give the roadability fans something to crow about.