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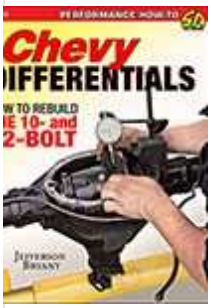
History and Identification of Chevy 10 and 12 Bolt Chevy Differentials

hevy 10- and 12-bolt axle assemblies have been standard equipment on GM passenger cars, uscle cars, and trucks for decades. The rugged, reliable, and efficient Chevy 12-bolt has stablished itself as the preeminent rear differential for GM muscle cars since its debut in 1965. owever, the smaller 10-bolt unfairly gained the reputation as a weak and inadequate rear end r high-performance applications. But there are several models in the 10-bolt line-up. The naller 7.5- and 8.2-inch 10-bolt rear axles can't transmit horsepower loads in excess of 400 p. However, the 8.5- and 8.6-inch 10-bolts are extremely stout and effective rear differentials at can transmit up to 1,000 hp to the rear wheels.



This Tech Tip is From the Full Book, CHEVY DIFFERENTIALS: HOW TO REBUILD THE 10- AND 12-BOLT. For a comprehensive guide on this entire subject you can visit this link:

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he GM 10-bolt rear end is quite possibly the most misunderstood and undervalued rear ifferential ever created. Even though it has been used in every major GM rear-wheel-drive latform, the 10-bolt has a bad reputation for being a low-performance unit. Nothing could be rther from the truth. The 10-bolt can handle just about anything you throw at it, as long as ou use the right axle, either the 8.5- or 8.6-inch. That is the great caveat; there are four sizes f 10-bolt GM rear ends: 7.5/7.625-, 8.2-, 8.5-, and 8.6-inch. These sizes refer to the diameter of he ring gear, and the one you use makes a big difference in the performance potential. The 5- and 8.6-inch provide superior performance and have a larger ring and pinion gear surface handle high horsepower. Also, these surfaces run cooler because of their sheer size.

This is the Moser Engineering 12-bolt axle assembly. As you can see, the Chevy 12-bolt differential is one stout axle, and it was the rear axle of choice for GM muscle cars and many GM competition cars. Big-block Chevelles, Camaros, and other GM high-performance vehicles were fitted with the 12-bolt limited-slip axle to maximize torque transfer and traction. (Photo Courtesy Moser Engineering)

10-Bolt Identification

ou need to be able to accurately identify the GM 10-bolt. Therefore, you need be able to hoose the more desirable 8.5- or 8.6-inch and avoid the smaller 7.5/7.625- and 8.2-inch units. lentifying the 10-bolt axle is easy. The nomenclature actually refers to the number of ring ear bolts. The outer cover matches; 10 bolts hold the cover onto the housing.

This ring-and-pinion gear has suffered catastrophic failure. Be sure the mesh is correct and that the installed parts are correct so you don't destroy components. If you take off the center section cover and discover this kind of damage, you need to identify the cause so you don't repeat this type of failure.

.2-Inch Units

he key to identifying the 8.2 is the shape of the housing and the spacing between the lower

olts on the cover. The 8.2 has a smooth, round lower case area, with an 11-inch cover that has diagonal indentation at the top or a $10^{5/8}$-inch irregular-shaped cover. The pinion nut should measure $1^{1/8}$ inches, as long as it is the OEM pinion nut.

8.2 Vehicle Applications

The 8.2 10-bolts are commonly found in the following vehicles.

Body	*Years*	*Models*
A-Body	1964–1972	Chevelle, Skylark, Cutlass, etc.
B-Body	1964–1972	Caprice, Biscayne, etc.
F-Body	1967–1970	Camaro, Firebird
X-Body	1964–1971	Chevy II, Nova, etc.

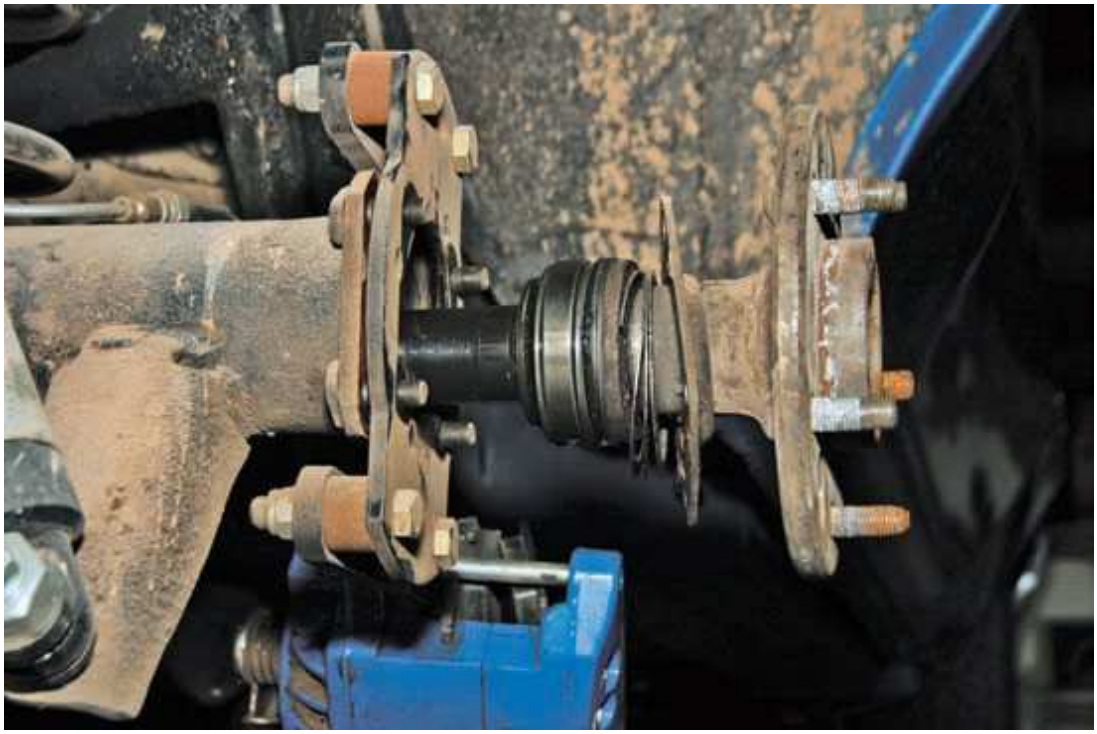
side the 8.2, the ring gear bolts have 9/16-inch socket heads with 3/8-24 threads. The pinion iameter is 1.438 inches with 25 splines. The axles are retained by a set of C-clips on the inner nd of the axle shaft inside the carrier.

.5-Inch Units

lost 8.5-inch 10-bolts have two lugs on the bottom of the housing at the 5 and 7 o'clock ositions. These should be square blocks, each with the outer side 90 degrees (vertical) to the oad and the bottom-side surface horizontal to the road. The covers are often 11 inches round ith a bulge on the driver's side for the ring gear or a $10^{5/8}$-inch irregular shape with the same ulge. The distance between the lower cover bolt and either adjacent bolt is $3^{3/4}$ inches. The inion nut is $1^{1/4}$ inches.

he 8.5-inch differentials have 10$^{3/4}$-inch hex head bolts with 7/16-20-inch left-hand thread or everse-thread bolts that hold the ring gear to the carrier. The pinion shaft diameter is 1.625 ches with 28 or 30 splines, which is the same as the GM 12-bolt design. Most 8.5 10-bolts are -clip axles, so a set of C-clips retains the inner end of the axle shaft inside the carrier.

Buick and Oldsmobile bolt-in axles mount at the bearing flanges on the housing ends. They retain the axle shafts in the event of a failure. The four bolts that hold the drum back plate on also retain the flange. Note that this axle has been converted to disc brakes.



Bolt-in axles include (right to left) the axle, retainer plate, split washer shim, press-on bearing, and housing end. To remove the axle shafts, you need to remove the four bolts.

The rear cover's shape and the number of bolts are identifying features for GM rear differentials. The round 10-bolt cover with a bulge for the ring gear identifies this axle assembly as an 8.5-inch 10-bolt. The two lugs on the lower case at the 5 and 7 o'clock positions are also identifying features. The 8.2-inch differential does not have these lugs.

A pair of long flat areas on the front side of each axle tube is a clear indicator of an 8.5-inch Chevy 10-bolt.

8.5-inch Vehicle Applications

General Motors installed the 8.5 10-bolt axle assemblies in many of its most popular vehicles.

Body	*Years*	*Models*
A-Body	1970–1977	Chevelle, Skylark, Cutlass, etc.
B-Body	1970–1996	Caprice, Impala, Bel-Air, etc.
E-Body	1975–1978	Buick Riviera
F-Body	1970–1981	Camaro, Firebird Carlo, etc.
X-Body	1970–1979	Nova, Omega, etc.
N/A	1979–2008	Trucks/vans (includes 8.6)

To help you identify the 8.2-inch housing, remember that it may have an irregular-shaped cover or a round cover, but it does not have lugs as on the 8.5-inch.

variant of this axle assembly was used in 1971–1972 Buick GSs and Skylarks, Oldsmobile utlasses, and some 1969–1972 Pontiac Grand Prixs, as well as the 1970–1972 Monte Carlos. hese axle assemblies had bolt-in axles and were used sporadically in A-Body wagons as ell. These are highly sought after, and as such, are hard to find. In this version, the axles bolt o the housing ends just as on a Ford 8- or 9-inch. This means that in the event of an axle reak, the wheel stays on the car.

5/7.625-Inch Units

o positively identify the Chevy 10-bolt in the 7.5/7.625-inch size, you need to measure it ecause it is very similar to the 8.5-inch housing. The case has a similar pair of lugs at the base f the center of the housing, which are located at 5 and 7 o'clock. However, the 7.5-inch lugs re smaller, with the outer side running at an angle and the inner side cut with a radius. The val-shaped cover measures $8^{5/16}$ inches by $10^{9/16}$ inches. The distance between the lower enter cover bolt and its adjacent bolts is $3^{1/4}$ inches. Inside, the ring gear bolts are the same s the 8.5 corporate unit. However, the pinion shaft measures 1.438 inches. The axles are etained by a set of C-clips on the inner end of the axle shaft inside the carrier.

7.5/7.6-Inch Vehicle Applications

General Motors installed the Chevy 10-bolt 7.5/7.6-inch differentials in the following vehicles.

Body	*Years*	*Models*
B-Body	1978–1996	Caprice, Oldsmobile 98, etc.
F-Body	1981–2002	Camaro and Firebird
G-Body	1977–1988	Malibu, Regal, Cutlass, El Camino, etc.
H-Body	1975–up GM	Vega and Monza
S-Series	1982–2005	Trucks and SUVs (4-cylinder)
N/A	1982–2005	GM mini-van, Astro, Safari

hevy 10-Bolt Models

lthough the 8.5- and 8.6-inch rear axles are more than capable of handling 400 hp (and with ome setups a bit more), the 10-bolt name has a bad reputation due to the inherently weaker 5 and 8.2 designs. Because these two sizes are so common in pre-1971 (8.2) and 1975– 2002 .5) vehicles, the 8.5 is lumped into the same group. This design was used in all GM rear-drive ars from 1964 through 1972. The 8.2 was phased out starting in 1971; it was replaced by the 5-inch "corporate" 10-bolt, and was installed in everything from Camaros and Chevelles until ne mid-1980s. It remained in the 1/2-ton trucks until 1999, when the 8.6 replaced it, using the ame basic design.

y far, the most common 10-bolt is the 7.5/7.6, and it has been around since 1975. It was stalled on small trucks and vans up to the 2005 model year. There is very little aftermarket upport for this axle assembly because it couldn't handle high-horsepower loads and nerefore its performance potential was marginal. In street applications, the 7.5 is good for 350 400 hp with street tires and lots of wheel spin. When sticky traction bars and/or sticky tires ere installed, owners found that 400 hp can quickly turn the 7.5 into shrapnel.

the final analysis, this axle is simply too small for high-horsepower cars, and so these axles hould be avoided for most muscle cars and certainly any racing applications. Although gear ets and a locking differential are available, these are only suitable for a mild street engine or ossibly a dirt track car. In the world of dirt track racing, some classes require a GM 7.5-inch 10-olt and because there is no traction on dirt, this rear works very well.

illions of 8.2-inch axle assemblies were built and many can be found in salvage yards. And ke the 7.5 axle, it has a fair amount of aftermarket support but the ring gear is too small and herefore it cannot handle much torque. If installed on a 400-hp or stronger engine, it often ails. And unfortunately, there simply isn't enough room to install bigger axles, so it isn't a able option for a high-performance car. To support high torque and horsepower loads, the xle shafts need a larger diameter and spline count. Combined with the small outer bearing aces, the 8.2 is limited to 28-spline axles.

or performance vehicles, the 8.2 can typically handle up to 400 hp with street tires, but that's he limit for this axle. If you bolt on even a set of drag radials, the axles bend or break, along ith having the potential for breaking the gears and carrier themselves. You can build these or performance, but if you use sticky tires, the superior traction and consequent strain from he grip will kill it quickly on the drag strip.

here are temporary fixes for the 8.2, such as a carrier girdle, but they don't provide a reliable nd suitably strong solution. When too much torque or traction is fed through the axle, it will ventually break the axle.

he 8.5- and 8.6-inch 10-bolts have larger ring-and-pinion gears, which makes an important

ifference. These rear axle assemblies can handle up to 400 hp. Among the Chevy 10-bolt amily of axles, these provide the best performance and durability. The car versions were in roduction from 1971 to 1987. General Motors has been using this axle assembly in cars for 16 ears and in 1/2-ton trucks for 30 years. The 2010-up Camaro uses a similar design (8.6 10-olt) in the center section of its independent rear suspension.

he 8.5 is limited to 30-spline axles, but can withstand 1,000 hp with slicks when properly built. he factory installed the 8.5-inch 10-bolt in the Buick Grand National, and that's the biggest aim to fame for this OEM axle. In stock form, the 8.5 can support wheel-standing launches om the turbocharged 6-cylinder. At just 3/8-inch smaller than the 8.875-inch 12-bolt ifferential, the 8.5-inch ring gear is strong enough for high-performance applications.

he aftermarket fully supports the 8.5. Gears of all sizes, limited-slip or Posi-Traction, lockers, nd spools are offered. Affordable performance is what the 8.5 is all about. Considering the hallenges of the typical 12-bolt swap for most muscle cars, when the 10-bolt units are often a olt-in swap, the 8.5 10-bolt starts to look really good.

o-Bolt Carriers

everal differential carriers are offered for the 10-bolt axle assemblies. However, only certain ear sets are offered for the carriers, especially if you change gear ratios. Typically, 10-bolt arriers are specific to a series of gears. A 2-Series carrier holds 2.56:1 and higher gears umerically lower) such as 2.41. These are very high gears, good for top speed, not for off-the-he performance. The 3-Series carriers are good for 2.73 and lower gears, so 3.08 and 3.73 ears work well.

10-Bolt Carrier Codes

Carriers are coded for their particular series. The most common numbers are as follows.

Axle Type	*Series*	*ID Code*	*Gear Ratio*
8.2	2-Series	ED32118	2.73:1 and lower
8.2	3-Series	EDB30116	3.08:1 and higher
8.5	2-Series	410409N	2.56:1 and lower
8.5	3-Series	410408N	2.73:1 and higher

To help you identify the 8.2-inch housing, remember that it may have an irregular-shaped cover or a round cover, but it does not have lugs as on the 8.5-inch.

In this photo, you clearly see the clutch packs with springs, so indeed these are limited-slip differentials. A Yukon aftermarket clutch-type limited-slip differential is on the left; the GM Posi-Traction differential from a 1971 Buick Gran Sport 8.5 10-bolt is on the right. As you can see, the Yukon casting is much thicker and so are the springs.

The stock axles for both Chevy 10- and 12-bolt differentials use C-clips unless you have one of the rare bolt-in axle units. A small bolt in the center of the carrier retains the crossbar.

The C-clips are not the strongest method for retaining the axle shafts; many owners

convert the Chevy 10- and 12-bolt axles to a flange type, which retains the axle if it fails. To remove the C-clip, you push the axle in to allow room to snag the C-clip with a pick. Once the C-clip has been removed, the axle slides out of the housing.

The placement of the casting numbers on an 8.2-inch 10-bolt varies by year and model. When you decode these numbers you can conclusively identify your axle.

Engine torque and suspension loads are placed on the rear axle assemblies, which are also subjected to moisture, dirt, and anything the road can throw at it. You may need to clean the rear housing before you can decode the casting numbers. You can simply clean the

area around the casting pad, but a power washer and some hot soapy water can work wonders for 40 years of grime.

o-Bolt Housings by the Numbers

efore you rebuild any axle, you should identify which axle you have. Once you have identified ıe housing, you must order the correct parts for the particular axle. The casting numbers for o-bolt rear differentials are typically located either on the forward side of the passenger-side xle tube or on the driver's side. These numbers are approximately 3 inches from the center ection.

10-Bolt Assembly Plant Codes

Code*	Plant	Code*	Plant
B	Buick	O	Oldsmobile
C	Buffalo	P	Pontiac
D	Cadillac	M	Pontiac/Canada
G	Detroit Gear & Axle	W	Warren, MI
K	GM of Canada		

* You may also see a shift number, in which 1 is the day shift and 2 is the night shift.

ne two examples at right show you how to decode 10-bolt housings.

970 axle code: COZ 01 01 G E

OZ Ratio

1 Month

1 Day of month

Plant

Posi-Traction source

971+ rear axle code: CB G 112 1 E

B Ratio

Plant

.2 Day of year

Shift

Posi-Traction source

o-Bolt Gears by the Numbers

ears are also "coded" with their teeth count; dividing the number of ring gear teeth by the umber of the pinion gear teeth yields the ratio.

full range of pinion gears is offered for the Chevy 10- and 12-bolt axle assemblies so you are ble to select the correct gear set for your vehicle, application, and setup. These are two inion gears for the 8.5-inch 10-bolt. The pinion on the left is part of a 4.11:1 gear set; the one n the right is a 3.08:1 pinion. You can see the dramatic difference in not only teeth but in verall diameter.

10-Bolt Gear Codes

Axle Ratio (:1)	*Ring Gear Tooth Count*	*Pinion Gear Tooth Count*	*Axle Ratio (:1)*	*Ring Gear Tooth Count*	*Pinion Gear Tooth Count*
2.56	41	16	3.36	37	11
2.73	41	15	3.42	41	12
3.07	43	14	3.55	39	11
3.08	40	13	3.73	41	11
3.08	37	12	4.10	41	10
3.31	43	13	4.11	37	9

10-Bolt Posi-Traction Source Codes

Code	*Source*
D	Dana Posi-Traction Differential
E	Eaton Posi-Traction Differential
G	Chevrolet G&A Posi-Traction Carrier
O	Oldsmobile Posi-Traction Carrier
W	Warren/Warner Motive
–	No Posi-Traction

A full range of pinion gears is offered for the Chevy 10- and 12-bolt axle assemblies so you are able to select the correct gear set for your vehicle, application, and setup. These are two pinion gears for the 8.5-inch 10-bolt. The pinion on the left is part of a 4.11:1 gear set; the one on the right is a 3.08:1 pinion. You can see the dramatic difference in not only teeth but in overall diameter.

The tooth count is stamped on the head of each pinion for both the pinion and the ring gear. As you can see, 13 is the hypoid gear countfor the pinion and 40 is the ring gear count. Pinion gears and ring gears are not interchangeable because they are designed for the specific (correct) mesh. Therefore, the specified pinion

and ring gears must be used together.

he tooth count is stamped on the head of each pinion for both the pinion and the ring gear. s you can see, 13 is the hypoid gear count for the pinion and 40 is the ring gear count. Pinion ears and ring gears are not interchangeable because they are designed for the specific orrect) mesh. Therefore, the specified pinion and ring gears must be used together.

2-Bolt Identification

/hen it comes to GM muscle cars and sports cars, the 12-bolt axle has been the top high-erformance axle assembly for decades. Compared to the Ford 9-inch, the 12-bolt positions he pinion gear higher on the ring gear. This reduces the load on the pinion, resulting in less arasitic loss from the friction and load.

he 12-bolt was introduced in 1964 and installed in cars and trucks until 1972. From 1972-on, eneral Motors installed its 10-bolt in cars and it remained an option for trucks until 1987.

nlike the various 10-bolts, the 12-bolt axle assembly has different components for cars and ucks. The passenger car 12-bolt has an oval-shaped differential cover, and it measures $10^{15/16}$ $10^{5/8}$ inches.

This 1967 Chevy truck used a trailing-arm design with coil and leaf springs. The half-leaf spring (left) serves as an overload spring for heavy loads or trailering.

General Motors installed different axles for different applications. Axles for high-performance or heavy-duty applications commonly used higher spline-count axles while common passenger car axles use lower spline counts. The top axle is an 8.5-inch 10-bolt with 30 splines; the bottom axle is an 8.5-inch with 28 splines. Note the thicker head on the bottom axle where the C-clip rides. This is specific to the carrier. The carrier and axles must match.

General Motors used several different suspension designs in their passenger cars throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This 8.5-inch 10-bolt came from a 1971 Buick GS. The large bushings at the top of the differential housing connect to the triangulated four-bar trailing arm system that the Buick used. It is more difficult to swap these housings from car to car if they do not share the same suspension design.

Camaros, Novas, and 1968 and later trucks used leaf springs like these. The axle may be over or under the leaf, depending on the application.

C2 and C3 Corvettes (built from 1963 to 1981) used a non-standard 10-bolt design. They used an independent rear suspension with transverse leaf springs. As a result, these cars use a specialized axle housing for this suspension, and it's not easily upgraded. You need to machine the housing to accept a 12-bolt carrier, which also requires custom axles. Essentially, the housing is machined to clear the larger gears and carrier, and it's not a job for the novice.

rucks have a smaller inner pinion shaft (1.438 inches versus 1.675 inches) and bearing, and the inion rides lower on the ring gear. In addition, the truck 12-bolt has an irregular shape. The arly truck 12-bolts had large axle splines with only 12 splines. The differential carriers are also arrower than on the passenger car units, and they do not interchange. That does not mean hat the truck units are not capable of performance builds because aftermarket 30-spline arriers and axles are available.

he truck 12-bolt axles are much more affordable than the car units because they are more lentiful but these units have fewer splines so they are not as strong as the axle in the car ssemblies. In addition, the trucks typically have larger axles and brakes.

lost passenger car 12-bolts used a four-bar trailing arm mounting system, with the exception f the Camaro and Nova, which used leaf springs. GM trucks from 1961 through 1967 used a wo-bar trailing arm mount, while the 1968-up trucks used leaf springs. There is some rossover on the trucks, as some earlier trucks had leaves and some later trucks had the ailing arms.

ll GM 12-bolts use C-clip–style axles. Aftermarket 12-bolt housings are based on the assenger car design.

12-Bolt Vehicle Applications

General Motors installed the 12-bolt rear end in several passenger cars.

Body	*Years*	*Models*
A-Body	1964–1972	Chevelle, Cutlass, GTO
B-body	1964–1972	Caprice, Impala
F-Body	1967–1972	Camaro, Firebird
X-Body	1964–1972	Chevy II, Nova

12-Bolt Gear Codes

The following is a list for the factory gear sizes available for each series of the passenger car 12-bolt.

2-Series

Gear Ratio (:1)	*Ring Gear Tooth Count*	*Pinion Gear Tooth Count*
2.29	32	14
2.56	41	16
2.73	41	15

3-Series

Gear Ratio (:1)	*Ring Gear Tooth Count*	*Pinion Gear Tooth Count*
3.07	43	14
3.31	43	13
3.55	39	11
3.73	41	11

4-Series

Gear Ratio (:1)	*Ring Gear Tooth Count*	*Pinion Gear Tooth Count*
4.10	41	10
4.56	41	9
4.88	39	8

2-Bolt Carriers

he 12-bolt carriers also use the same series-specific system as do the 10-bolts; each carrier nly works with certain gear sizes. The types are 2-, 3-, and 4-Series. The 2-Series is by far the ost common.

2-Bolt Housings by the Numbers

he casting numbers for the 12-bolt housings are typically found on the upper rear of the river's side of the center section. The casting numbers are simple to decode.

he first letter is the month of the year; A is January, B is February, and so on. The next digit is

ıe day it was built, and the last digit is the year it was built. For example, a 12-bolt axle that ʻas built on March 28, 1967, is C287.

The Chevy 12-bolt axle assemblies for passenger cars feature an oval cover with a diagonal indentation. This is a 1969 Chevelle 12-bolt housing.

Truck 12-bolts have an irregular cover with a ring gear pocket. This example is a 1967 Chevy C10. The truck housings are not as durable as the passenger car housings due to a narrower carrier and a smaller inner pinion bearing.

12-Bolt Axle Ratio Codes

Axle Code	*Axle Ratio (:1)*	*Axle Type*	*Axle Code*	*Axle Ratio (:1)*	*Axle Type*
CA	3.08		FM	3.36	Posi-Traction
CB	3.36		FN	3.55	
CC	3.73		FO	3.55	Posi-Traction
CD	3.07	Posi-Traction	FP	3.70	
CE	3.08	Posi-Traction	K2	3.55	
CF	3.31	Posi-Traction	K3	3.55	Posi-Traction
CG	3.36	Posi-Traction	K4	3.73	
CH	2.73	Posi-Traction	K5	3.73	Posi-Traction
CI	3.73	Posi-Traction	K6	4.10	Posi-Traction
CJ	3.08		K7	4.56	Posi-Traction
CP	2.73		K8	4.88	Posi-Traction
CR	3.70	Posi-Traction	KA	3.55	
CU	3.73	Posi-Traction with metallic brakes	KB	3.55	Posi-Traction
			KC	2.73	Posi-Traction
CV	3.70		KD	2.73	
CW	3.31		KF	3.55	Posi-Traction
CX	3.07		KJ	3.55	
CY	3.07		KK	4.10	Posi-Traction
CZ	2.73		KM	4.56	Posi-Traction
FH	2.73		KO	4.88	Posi-Traction
FI	2.73	Posi-Traction	KW	2.73	With metallic brakes
FJ	3.08				
FK	3.08	Posi-Traction	KX	3.07	Posi-Traction
FL	3.36		KY	3.31	Posi-Traction

K2	3.31

12-Bolt Assembly Plant Codes

Code	*Location*
B	Buffalo, New York
G	Chevrolet Gear & Axle
W	Warren, Michigan
K	McKinnon Industries

12-Bolt Production Month Codes

Code	*Month*
01	January
02	February
03	March
04	April
05	May
06	June
07	July
08	August
09	September
10	October
11	November
12	December

n the passenger-side front tube, the stamped axle code designates either 1969-and-earlier nits or 1969-and-later builds. The 1969- and-earlier codes have two letters, then a four-digit umber, followed by a letter, and possibly a shift number, for which 1 is the day shift and 2 is ne night shift.

nd finally, a Posi-Traction number was used.

or 1969 and later, the code typically features six to eight digits, including three letters, three umbers, and sometimes an additional number and letter. The first two letters indicate the ear-ratio code, the third letter notes the build plant, and three numbers designate the build ay from 001 to 365. Sometimes the shift code is stamped, and if the unit has a Posi-Traction, ou see a P stamp.

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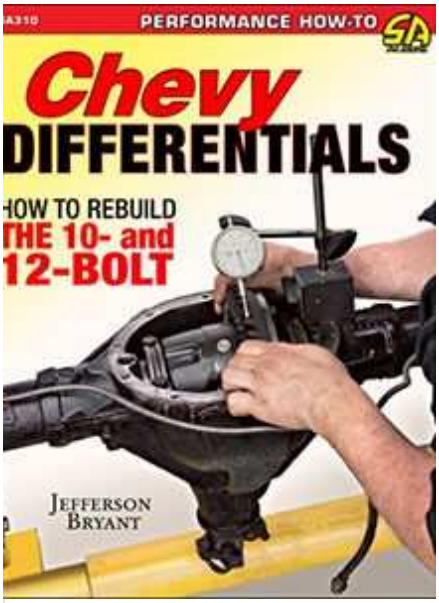

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