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1969 Honda CB750 Buyer's Guide

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1969 Honda CB750

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

IronHead single-year guide · Model year 1969 (K0 — the "sandcast" bikes) only

KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

- **Model year covered:** 1969 only — the K0 "sandcast" CB750. The SOHC CB750 ran 1969–1978 (K0–K8); this guide does not cover other years except where differences from 1969 are explicitly noted.
- **Designation:** the 1969 bike is simply the Honda CB750 in period literature; "K0" is the retrospective collector designation (Honda product code 300) applied once the K-series naming took hold.
- **Engine:** 736 cc air-cooled SOHC inline-four, two valves per cylinder; 61 mm × 63 mm bore × stroke; 9.0:1 compression; 67 hp @ 8,000 rpm. Chain-driven camshaft, rocker-arm valve actuation.
- **"Sandcast" defined:** the first **7,414** CB750s, with crankcases cast by the gravity (permanent-mold) process — rough-finished, not sand-cast at all; the name is a collector misnomer. Engine numbers **CB750E-1000001 through CB750E-1007414**.
- **Serial format:** frame **CB750-** followed by a seven-digit serial, stamped on the right side of the steering-head pipe; engine **CB750E-** followed by a seven-digit serial, stamped on the raised boss at the right-rear of the crankcase. Serials start at CB750-1000001 / CB750E-1000001.
- **Fuel system:** four 28 mm Keihin slide carburetors; factory main jet **#120**; **four-cable throttle** — K0-only (the K1 went to a bellcrank).
- **Ignition:** 12-volt battery-and-coil with two sets of contact-breaker points and a mechanical advance unit; the K0's quick-advance unit is fully advanced by about 2,000 rpm.
- **Transmission:** 5-speed constant-mesh, left-foot shift; multi-plate wet clutch; chain final drive; 16-tooth front / 45-tooth rear sprockets on the K0.
- **Brakes:** single 296 mm hydraulically operated front disc — the first production motorcycle with a disc brake; 179 mm rear drum.
- **Chassis:** tubular steel duplex-cradle frame; non-adjustable telescopic fork; dual rear shocks, preload-adjustable. Tires 3.25-19 front, 4.00-18 rear. Wheelbase 1453 mm (57.2 in); wet weight 226 kg (499 lb); fuel 18.2 L (4.8 US gal).
- **Starting:** electric and kick.
- **1969 colors:** Candy Blue Green, Candy Ruby Red, Candy Gold (Honda paint codes AZ, CM, CQ).
- **Year-only features:** straight-cut fender edges, nuts on the back of the mirrors, wrinkle in the tank below the filler cap, 10-bolt (not 11) clutch cover, left-hand horn mount, finned oil-filter housing, cast-in date codes on the crankcase.
- **Launch:** Tokyo Show, October 1968; US debut, Las Vegas, January 1969; US price $1,495.
- **Production context:** 7,414 sandcast bikes out of more than 430,000 SOHC CB750s built 1969–1978 — under two percent of the line, and the bikes that command the serious money today.

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IronHead single-year guide · Model year 1969 (K0 — the "sandcast" bikes) only · Covers the first-production 1969 CB750 with gravity-cast ("sandcast") crankcases. The 1970-and-later CB750 (K1–K8) is not covered except where differences from 1969 are explicitly noted

> ***Year chosen: 1969.*** *The first year of the most consequential motorcycle ever mass-produced — the bike that created the superbike category and made the rest of the industry obsolete overnight. The 1969 machines are the "sandcast" bikes: the first 7,414 CB750s, built with gravity-cast crankcases before Honda invested in die-casting tooling. They are also the most faked and the most misunderstood. Rough cases, unstamped mufflers, mirror-stem nuts, a four-cable throttle, and more than ninety running changes in the first year alone mean "correct" on a 1969 CB750 is a function of the serial number, not the brochure. This guide tells you what to look for — and what the rough castings are really telling you.*

1. Manufacturer history: Honda

Honda Motor Co., Ltd. was founded in **1948** by **Soichiro Honda**, a mechanic who had developed his own piston-ring design in 1938, tried to sell it to Toyota, was turned down, and started his own company instead. Through the 1950s and 1960s Honda built its reputation on small, affordable, reliable motorcycles — the Dream, the Cub, the Superhawk — and, less visibly to the public, on Grand Prix racing. By 1966 Honda had chalked up five consecutive Grand Prix victories with the legendary 250 cc six-cylinder, 24-valve RC166 ridden by Mike Hailwood — and then stepped out of racing.

The CB750 was born at the race track but aimed at the street, and specifically at America. Urged on by American Honda management and market research — Honda officials had met US dealers and understood the opportunity for a larger machine — Honda established a 20-member design team to build a competitor to a rumored 750 cc triple from Triumph and the large-displacement machines from Harley-Davidson and BMW. The design brief was explicit: high-speed stability, superior braking, minimal vibration, sensible ergonomics, low maintenance, and daring style. Racing technology fed directly into the program — the CB750 drew on Honda's proven multi-cylinder experience, and the company's 1966 withdrawal from Grand Prix racing freed the engineering talent that built it.

The result was unveiled to a stunned public at the **Tokyo Show in October 1968**, made its United States debut at **Las Vegas in January 1969**, and was shown to the British public at the Brighton Show in April 1969 after the press had sampled it at Brands Hatch. The US price was **$1,495** — within reach of the average enthusiast. For the first time, a mass-produced four-cylinder motorcycle with an overhead camshaft, a five-speed gearbox, electric start, a front disc brake, and a four-into-four exhaust could be bought off the showroom floor. The specification made the entire opposition — British twins, Harley big twins, BMW flat twins — look obsolete overnight.

Honda's confidence, however, was not absolute. The company was not sure the CB750 would succeed, so it hedged: it did not invest in expensive die-casting tooling for the engines. The first 7,414 bikes were built with gravity-cast crankcases — a low-volume process — and only when the bike sold did Honda invest in pressure die-casting dies for mass production. That business decision, made by a cautious company, created the most collectible variant of the most important Japanese motorcycle ever built.

For the restorer, this history sets one expectation above all: **the 1969 CB750 is a first-year product from a company improvising at speed.** Honda dramatically underestimated demand and would use whatever pieces were available to assemble a bike. More than ninety running changes have been documented among the surviving sandcast bikes. "Correct" on a 1969 CB750 means correct for the serial number — the SOHC/4 community's sandcast registry, David Silver Spares, and specialists like Victor World have spent decades cataloging exactly which details belong to which part of the 7,414.

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2. Model history: the CB750

The SOHC CB750 ran from 1969 to 1978, designated K0 through K8 (production code 300 for the K0/K1, 341 for K2–K6, 405 for K7/K8). Each designation correlated to a model year:

Model	Model years	Prod. code	Frame start	Engine start
CB750K0 — this guide (1969 sandcast)	**1969–70**	**300**	**CB750-1000001**	**CB750E-1000001**
CB750K1	1970–71	300	CB750-1044650	CB750E-1044806
CB750K2	1972	341	CB750-2000001	CB750E-2000001
CB750K3	1973	341	CB750-2200001	CB750E-2200001
CB750K4	1974	341	CB750-2300001	CB750E-2300001
CB750K5	1975	341	CB750-2500001	CB750E-2372115
CB750K6	1976	341	CB750-2540001	CB750E-2428762
CB750K7	1977	405	CB750-2700009	CB750E-2700001
CB750K8	1978	405	CB750-2800001	CB750E-3000001

Notes on the table:

- The K0's model years are given as 1969–70 because the K0 designation (product code 300) continued past the sandcast run into 1970 with die-cast cases. **This guide covers the 1969 sandcast bikes only** — engine numbers CB750E-1007414 and below.
- The K1's frame-start figure differs between sources (see the corrections file) — the engine-start figure CB750E-1044806 marks the practical boundary of the die-cast K0 run.
- The CB750F Supersport (1975–1978) and the CB750A Hondamatic (1976–1978) are separate model lines and out of scope for this guide.
- The die-cast K0 (1969–70, post-sandcast) is the same motorcycle with smooth crankcases and a handful of running changes — the single most valuable fact in this table for a buyer, because a die-cast K0 is a fine motorcycle but not a sandcast, and the price difference is roughly double.

The arc of the line: the K0–K6 bikes are largely similar in appearance, the K7/K8 were restyled, and the F and A variants spun off in the mid-1970s. None of that matters for 1969. What matters is that the 1969 bike launched the line, that every detail on it was subject to change, and that the bike's value today rests on proving — serial number by serial number — that the details are the 1969 ones.

3. What is unique about the 1969 CB750

3.1 The "sandcast" crankcases — and why the word is a misnomer

The 1969 CB750's crankcases were not cast in sand. They were cast by the **gravity (permanent-mold) process**: molten aluminum poured into steel molds under gravity, rather than pressure-forced into dies. The steel molds were built before Honda's production casting dies were finished, because the company would not invest in die-casting tooling until the bike proved itself. As the SOHC/4 Owners Club explains it: the molds are steel, not sand; it is the gravity casting method — and the rough mold surface — that gives the parts their finish, "about the same texture as 600-grit sandpaper, although not as sharp," the result of micro-deformities where molten aluminum meets the cooler steel mold walls.

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After the first **7,414** CB750s were built, Honda invested in die-casting dies: pressure-forced aluminum gives a much smoother surface, a stronger casting, and better quality control — everything mass production needs. The die-cast K0 that followed is mechanically the same motorcycle. The distinction is entirely in the cases.

Three facts anchor the sandcast definition, and all three are buyer-protection facts:

1. **Engine numbers CB750E-1000001 through CB750E-1007414.** A CB750 with an engine number of CB750E-1007414 or lower is a sandcast; above it, die-cast. This is the single test that matters.
2. **The changeover happened in late summer 1969.** Sources place the die-cast switchover "before August 1969" (Mecum) or for "machines completed prior to September 1969" (Bonhams). The honest statement: the last sandcast bikes were built around August–September 1969.
3. **The cases are weaker.** The gravity-cast cases are more porous and brittle than die-castings. Many of the first 7,414 bikes have had their cases replaced over the decades — broken chains, thrown rods, and simple mishaps that a die-cast case would survive. An original, numbers-correct sandcast engine with its factory cases intact is, in Hagerty's phrase, "the holy grail of production CB750s." A sandcast bike with replacement cases is still a real sandcast by serial number — but its value is not the holy-grail value, and the seller should say so.

1969 buyer cautions on the cases:

- **Rough is correct.** A sandcast crankcase that looks smooth has been polished, vapor-blasted, or replaced. The rough gravity-cast texture is the originality marker — do not "restore" it away.
- **Check the clutch cover fasteners.** The sandcast clutch cover is held by **10 screws**; the die-cast engines use **11**. A claimed sandcast with an 11-bolt cover needs explaining.
- **Look at the top of the case.** Honda cast date codes into the top of the crankcase in month-day form (e.g. "6-23" for June 23). A date code consistent with a mid-1969 build supports the serial number; a missing or mismatched code invites questions.

3.2 Running changes: the 1969 bike is not one specification

The 1969 CB750 cannot be judged against a single specification sheet, because Honda was changing the bike while building it. The SOHC/4 sandcast registry — which accounts for a little over 400 of the 7,414 bikes — has identified **more than ninety distinctions** among surviving sandcasts: small detail differences in hardware, housings, stampings, and finishes across the run. Honda underestimated demand and used whatever pieces were on hand.

This has one practical consequence for the restorer: **1969 correctness is serial-number-specific.** A detail that is correct at engine 1,200 may be incorrect at engine 6,800. When vetting a bike, compare its details against documented bikes in the same serial neighborhood — not against the first bike off the line, and not against a 1970 K0.

Documented early-run details that changed during 1969 (all cited in Section 3.3 and the corrections file):

- Horn mounting moved from the left side to the right (the SOHC/4 Owners Club's distinctions list puts the left-hand horn through about VIN 3950)
- Oil-filter housings appear both finned and smooth; Honda Service Bulletin CB750 #13 (January 1970) updated the oil-filter bolt and housing on VINs CB750-1001783 through CB750-1009554 — squarely inside the sandcast range
- Frame and engine numbers were paired within a few hundred of each other, but not identically — documented sandcast examples show frame 1000565 with engine 1000516, and frame 1006725 with engine 1006839. Do not demand matching numbers on a sandcast the way you would on a British bike.

3.3 The 1969-only details checklist

Use this list when vetting a claimed 1969 sandcast. No single item proves the bike; the pattern across all of them does.

- **Rough gravity-cast crankcases** (Section 3.1) with cast-in date code on top

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- **10-screw clutch cover** (die-cast: 11)
- **Straight-cut fender edges** — the front and rear fenders end in a straight cut, not the rolled/rounded edge of later bikes
- **Nuts on the back of the mirrors** — the mirror stems attach with visible nuts behind the perch, a low-volume assembly detail
- **Wrinkle in the tank below the filler cap** — a press-forming wrinkle in the steel, present on original 1969 tanks. It is a factory feature, not damage; a "perfect" tank without it on a claimed-original 1969 bike deserves a second look
- **Finned oil-filter housing** on the earliest bikes (smooth housings are also documented on K0s — check against the serial neighborhood; Service Bulletin #13 applies)
- **Left-hand horn mount** through roughly the first 3,950 bikes
- **Unstamped mufflers** on the earliest bikes: the four-into-four exhaust's mufflers were unstamped on early K0/sandcast bikes; HM300 stamping by the passenger footpeg appears on later K0 mufflers. (One prominent dealer listing claims HM300 pipes on a sandcast — see the corrections file; check stamping against the serial neighborhood.)
- **Four-cable throttle** — four individual cables to the four carburetors, K0-only; the K1 switched to a bellcrank linkage
- **Quick-advance spark unit** — the K0's mechanical advancer is fully advanced by about 2,000 rpm (later bikes delayed full advance)
- **#120 main jets** in the 28 mm Keihins (later years jetted down)
- **16T/45T final-drive sprockets** (the K1 went 17/48)
- **Double-cut front mudguard**, rolled rear rim, short chain guard, stubby brake lines — small low-volume details documented on unrestored sandcasts
- **No K-suffix anywhere on the bike** — in 1969 it was simply the CB750. Any "K0" marking on the machine itself is a later addition.

3.4 The launch context — why 1969 matters beyond the castings

The 1969 CB750 was the first production motorcycle with an **inline-four engine and disc brakes**, and the first motorcycle ever called a **"superbike."** The Tokyo unveiling (October 1968), the Las Vegas US debut (January 1969, $1,495), and the Brighton showing (April 1969) bracket the launch of the bike that ended the British industry's dominance of the big-bike market. Every 1969 CB750 is therefore two collectibles in one: a first-year example of the most important Japanese motorcycle ever built, and — if the serial number says so — one of 7,414 sandcast bikes. Price the two identities separately: a die-cast 1969–70 K0 is worth roughly half what a verified sandcast brings, and the market has held that ratio for a decade.

The restorer's position on a 1969 CB750 is simple: verify the engine number first (CB750E-1007414 or lower), then verify the details against the serial neighborhood, then — and only then — talk about condition. A rough-case engine with correct details and honest wear is worth more than a polished, "better than new" restoration that erased the evidence.

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4. Technical restoration data — 1969 Honda CB750

4.1 Frame and engine numbers (1969)

- **Format:** Frame number stamped on the **right side of the steering-head pipe**, format **CB750-** followed by a seven-digit serial (e.g. CB750-1000565). Engine number stamped on the **elevated boss at the right-rear of the crankcase**, format **CB750E-** followed by a seven-digit serial (e.g. CB750E-1000516). Per Honda's own machine-identification page: "the frame and engine numbers are usually identical."
- **1969 allocation:** the serial blocks open at **CB750-1000001 / CB750E-1000001**. Sandcast (1969) engines run through **CB750E-1007414**; die-cast K0 production continued past that into 1970 (the K1's engine block opens at CB750E-1044806).
- **Pairing reality on sandcasts:** documented examples show frame and engine numbers within a few hundred of each other but not identical (1000565/1000516; 1006725/1006839 — Bonhams auction records). The registry shows wider spreads on some bikes. Treat a small spread as normal for 1969; a spread of thousands, or an engine number above 1007414 in a claimed sandcast, is a red flag.
- **Build-date vs model-year caution:** there is no separate build-date plate on a 1969 CB750 the way later Hondas carry; the serial number is the dating instrument. All 7,414 sandcast bikes are 1969 machines. A die-cast K0 with a 1969 build date but an engine number above 1007414 is a 1969-built bike that is not a sandcast — the distinction that decides the value.
- **Ordering parts:** Honda's product code for the K0/K1 is **300** — it appears in the middle of Honda part numbers for K0/K1-specific parts. Quote the full frame and engine numbers to David Silver Spares or CMSNL; the 300/341 product-code split (K0/K1 vs K2-on) is the fastest way to filter fitment.

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