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1972 Honda CB750 Buyer's Guide

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1972 Honda CB750

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

IronHead single-year guide · Model year 1972 (CB750K2) only

KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

- **Model year covered:** 1972 only (CB750K2). The SOHC CB750 ran from the 1969 K0 through the 1978 K8; this guide covers no other year except where differences from 1972 are explicitly noted.
- **Engine:** 736 cc air-cooled SOHC inline-four; 61 mm × 63 mm bore × stroke; 9.0:1 compression; **67 hp @ 8,000 rpm**; 60 Nm (44 ft-lb) @ 7,000 rpm. Two valves per cylinder, chain-driven single overhead camshaft, dry sump.
- **Fuel system:** four 28 mm Keihin carburetors. Early-1972 bikes carry the 657A series (brass floats, #110 main jets); from about March 1972 the 657B series (#105 mains, plastic floats).
- **Ignition:** 12-volt battery-and-coil, twin breaker-point sets (cylinders 1–4 and 2–3) with a mechanical centrifugal advancer. Points gap 0.012–0.016 in; static timing on the F mark; full advance ≈40° BTDC by 2,300–2,500 rpm.
- **Transmission:** 5-speed, wet multiplate clutch, duplex-chain primary drive, chain final drive. Overall ratios: 13.99 / 9.54 / 7.45 / 6.14 / 5.26.
- **Starting:** electric starter plus kick starter, both standard.
- **Chassis:** steel duplex-cradle frame; non-adjustable telescopic front fork; twin rear shocks with preload adjustment.
- **Brakes:** single 296 mm front disc with single-piston hydraulic caliper; 179 mm rear drum.
- **Wheels/tires:** wire-spoke wheels, 19 in front / 18 in rear; 3.25-19 front, 4.00-18 rear.
- **Dimensions:** 1,453 mm (57.2 in) wheelbase; 800 mm (31.5 in) seat height; 18.2 L (4.8 US gal) fuel tank; period listings put dry weight at 480–498 lb depending on source (see Section 4.5).
- **Serial numbers:** frames begin at **CB750-2000001**, engines at **CB750E-2000001** (production code 341). The frame number is stamped on the right side of the steering head; the engine number on the raised pad at the right rear of the crankcase.
- **1972 colors (US):** Candy Gold Custom, Brier Brown Metallic, Flake Sunrise Orange — plus Silver Metallic Custom and Astro Purple Metallic in Honda parts lists for other markets.
- **Key 1972-only features:** HM341 4-into-4 exhaust (K0/K1 used the HM300); separate warning-light pod between the handlebars; wraparound rear grab rail; larger taillight on a revised rear fender; turn-signal buzzer with an extra left-switch button; black headlight shell; gold tank stripes.
- **Production:** no audited 1972-only figure exists — Honda never published model-year production splits for the SOHC line.

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> ***Year chosen: 1972.*** *The K2 is the CB750 grown up: the sandcast teething troubles and K0/K1 running changes are behind it, the exhaust is the quieter, more restrictive HM341 4-into-4, the cockpit gains its own warning-light pod between the handlebars, and the 736 cc SOHC four settles into the 67-horsepower, front-disc formula that made the model a legend. It is also the most impersonated early CB750 — K1s and K3s wear K2 clothes easily — so this guide spends its effort on the tells that separate a true 1972 bike from a dressed-up one.*

1. Manufacturer history: Honda

Soichiro Honda began as a mechanic who designed his own piston rings in 1938; when Toyota declined the design, he founded his own company, and **Honda Motor Co. was officially established in 1948**. The early years were scooters and small motorcycles — the A-Type, the 1949 Dream D-Type — and through the 1960s Honda's largest road bike was the 450 cc CB450 twin. The company proved itself in racing early, sending a factory team to the Isle of Man TT in 1959 and taking the team prize.

The CB750 arrived in 1969 and changed motorcycling's center of gravity. Development was guided by a deliberate brief: stability at cruising speeds of 85–100 mph, an efficient and reassuring braking system, minimal vibration for long trips, electrical components reliable enough to keep the rider safe at all times, a seductive design, and a machine easy and cheap to service. The announced price of $1,495 (initial MSRP ended up around $1,800) undercut the $2,800–$4,000 British and European big bikes by a devastating margin. The formula — a 736 cc air-cooled SOHC four with 67 hp, a five-speed gearbox, a front disc brake, an electric starter, and Honda build quality — is widely credited as the first superbike and the template for the modern Universal Japanese Motorcycle. The CB750 has since been inducted into the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame's Classic Bikes, named among the "Greatest Motorbikes Ever" by the Discovery Channel, exhibited in *The Art of the Motorcycle*, and placed in the UK's National Motor Museum.

For the restorer, this history sets the tone of the whole SOHC line: Honda built the CB750 to be serviced, not worshipped. Parts interchange across years is broad, the factory parts books are detailed, and the owner community — the SOHC/4 forums, VintageCB750, specialists like David Silver Spares and CMSNL — has spent decades documenting exactly which part belongs to which year. That is what makes a single-year guide possible: for the CB750, "correct" is usually checkable, not a matter of opinion.

2. Model history: the CB750

The SOHC CB750 ran from 1969 to 1978 as the K series, with the F-series Super Sport joining in 1975. Model designations, start-of-production serials, and factory production codes per the marque's consolidated records:

Model	Model years	Frame from	Notable
CB750K0	1969–70	CB750-1000001	Launch. Die-cast engine; 8,500-rpm redline; HM300 4-into-4 exhaust.
CB750K1	1970–71	CB750-1044650	8,000-rpm redline introduced; revised carburetor linkages, side panels, airbox; HM300 exhaust carried over.

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Model	Model years	Frame from	Notable
CB750K2 — this guide	**1972**	**CB750-2000001**	**HM341 exhaust; warning-light pod; wraparound grab rail; larger taillight; turn-signal buzzer; black headlight shell.**
CB750K3	1973	CB750-2200001	Continued K2 themes; new colors including Candy Bacchus Olive.
CB750K4	1974	CB750-2300001	Revised tank striping; two-cable throttle; larger side reflectors.
CB750K5	1975	CB750-2500001	Comstar-style changes begin downstream; engine/frame numbers diverge in sequence.
CB750K6	1976	CB750-2540001	Late SOHC refinements.
CB750K7	1977	CB750-2700009	Production code 405.
CB750K8	1978	CB750-2800001	Last of the SOHC line; production code 405.

A note on the K-number convention: beginning in 1968 the "K" suffix generally changed annually, with K0 marking the first model in the series. From September 1973 American Honda additionally adopted a year identifier inside the model number (so a 1976 US bike is a CB750K'76 while most other markets call the same machine a K6) — a standing source of confusion when reading serial charts.

The K2's production code is **341**, its US release is recorded as March 1, 1972, and the Japanese domestic K2 followed in April 1972. The CB750F Super Sport (F0, 1975) is a separate model line and is not covered here.

3. What is unique about the 1972 CB750

3.1 The HM341 exhaust — the K2's own voice

The single most important year-marker on a 1972 CB750 is the exhaust. The K0 and K1 shipped with the **HM300** 4-into-4 system — a megaphone-style set with a small baffle, loud, free-flowing, and much loved. The K2 introduced the **HM341**: a more restrictive, heavily baffled 4-into-4 (a five-chamber design, with later production adding chambers) that was noticeably quieter and more "serene." Contemporary and modern opinion agrees the 341 strangled the engine slightly compared with the 300 — which is exactly why so many HM341 sets were thrown away in period in favor of 4-into-1 systems.

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For the factory-correct restorer, the consequence is blunt: a 1972 bike wearing HM300 pipes is wearing the wrong exhaust, no matter how good it sounds. The HM341's baffled construction is also the reason original sets are scarce — they were discarded, not worn out — so budget accordingly and check reproductions (such as the Yamiya sets) against the 341's baffle count and stamping rather than the earlier "no number" HM300 pattern.

3.2 The cockpit: warning-light pod and instruments

The K2 moved the warning lights out of the instruments into a **separate pod mounted between the handlebars** — oil pressure, neutral, high beam, and turn-signal indicators in their own housing. The K1's dummy lights lived inside the gauge clusters themselves, so the pod is an instant visual tell: pod present, K2-or-later; no pod, K1-or-earlier (or a K2 that has been "converted" — see the buyer cautions).

The tachometer carries the **8,000-rpm redline** introduced on the K1 (the K0's tachs read to 8,500). A 1972-claimed bike with an 8,500-redline tachometer is wearing K0 instruments.

3.3 Bodywork, brightwork, and small hardware

- **Rear grab rail:** the K2 wears a rail that wraps around the rear of the seat; the K1 had a small grab bar. The rail's mounting also changed the rear turn-signal brackets and rubbers.
- **Taillight and rear fender:** larger taillight lens on a revised rear fender with a ramp mount — the K1's smaller lens and fender do not interchange cosmetically.
- **Side covers:** smaller than the K0's, with no slots on the leading edge, and K2-specific emblems (the K1's red side-cover jewels are a different part).
- **Tank:** gold stripes on the fuel tank as the K2 graphic treatment.
- **Headlight:** black headlight shell and brackets on the K2; the K1's shell and brackets were painted body color, with smaller reflectors.
- **Forks:** chromed upper fork covers.
- **Chainguard:** plastic on the K2.
- **Rear shocks:** black upper mounts rather than the K1's polished aluminum tops.
- **Seat latch and helmet holder:** the K2's equipment list added the helmet holder (and a locking seat latch); the Japanese-market K2's launch equipment specifically called out the clearance lamp, passing switch, and helmet holders as new safety and usability equipment.

3.4 The 1972-only turn-signal buzzer

The K2's left handlebar switch carries an **extra button at the bottom for the turn-signal buzzer** — a buzzing reminder with a self-cancelling option that appears on the 1972 model only. It is a small part with an outsized identification value: that extra button is one of the fastest ways to confirm a 1972 switch cluster, and one of the first things a K2-to-K1 "conversion" gets wrong.

3.5 Running changes inside the 1972 production run

Honda did not freeze the K2 at launch. The documented in-year running change is in the carburetors:

- **To about March 1972:** Keihin **657A**-series carbs, brass staggered floats, **#110 main jets**.
- **From about March 1972:** Keihin **657B**-series carbs, plastic floats, **#105 main jets**.

All else being equal, the jetting change is a build-date marker, not a model-year one — a very early K2 with #110s is correct, and so is a late K2 with #105s. Swapping jets to "the K2 jetting" without knowing the carb series is a common restoration error. Supporting details: slide needles clipped in the **4th notch down from the top** (blunt end) with the stock HM341 exhaust (middle notch only if HM300 pipes are fitted); idle air screws **3/4 to 1 turn out** from lightly seated; float height 25 mm on one side and 26 mm on the other for the staggered brass floats (correct as found — do

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not "even them out"), 26 mm for the 657B plastic floats.

The K2 also standardized **valve-guide seals on all eight valves** (exhaust guide part 12027-300-330 for the K2) after the seal/no-seal shuffling of the K0/K1 years — a small but genuine internal year-marker for an engine that is opened up.

3.6 The build-date caution: not every "1972" CB750 is a K2

The K1 was released in September 1970 and sold well into 1972 — and late-production K1s in the 10-million frame block were titled and sold as 1972 models. Auction records include 1972-titled CB750s carrying K1-range frame numbers (for example, a 1972-sold bike on frame CB7501077241). Conversely, the K2's US release is recorded as March 1, 1972.

The rule: **verify the model against the frame number and the steering-head build plate (which carries the month and year of manufacture), never against the title year alone.** A "1972 CB750" with a frame in the 10-million block is a late K1 wearing a 1972 title — a fine motorcycle, but not a K2, and not restorable to K2 specification without a frame swap.

3.7 Buyer cautions

- **The K2 costume.** Because the differences between K1, K2, and K3 are mostly bolt-on (pod, rail, taillight, badges, exhaust), dressing a K1 or K3 as a K2 is easy and common. The frame number (the 2-million block) is the one thing that cannot be bolted on — check it first, then the switchgear buzzer button, then the details.
- **Non-matching engines.** The factory's machine-identification notes state frame and engine numbers "are usually identical." A K2 with a non-matching engine has had a transplant — price and describe it as one. (Note: the K5-on bikes diverged in sequence, so this expectation applies to the K2 year specifically, not the whole line.)
- **Blank engine pads.** A crankcase with a blank, unstamped number pad is a dealer replacement case — commonly fitted after the classic CB750 failure of a thrown drive chain smashing the cases. It is honest history, but it is not the original engine.
- **The advancer.** The spark advancer lives on the end of the crankshaft and its shaft runs true to 0.002 in from the factory. Never turn the engine backward using the points-side nut — it bends the advancer shaft, and the ignition timing will then wander no matter how carefully the points are set. Check advancer-shaft runout on any unknown-history engine.
- **Carburetor series vs jetting.** #110 mains belong to 657A carbs, #105 to 657B. Jets are cheap; correct carb bodies are not. Match the series to the build date before rejetting.
- **Repaints in non-1972 colors.** The K2's Candy Gold is the **Custom** variant (code LX, darker than the 1969–71 Candy Gold) — a Candy Gold K2 in the earlier shade, or in a later color like Candy Bacchus Olive, is a year-incorrect repaint. See Section 4.6.

4. Technical restoration data — 1972 Honda CB750

4.1 Frame and engine numbers (1972)

- **Format:** frame number stamped on the **right side of the steering head**; engine number stamped on the **raised pad at the right rear of the crankcase**, just below the cylinder fins. A steering-head identification plate also carries the bike's build date as month/year. The K2 uses the short pre-1981 format — no 17-digit VIN.
- **1972 allocation:** frames begin at **CB750-2000001**, engines at **CB750E-2000001** (production code 341). Any frame number in the 2-million block with K2 equipment is a 1972-model machine; the 10-million block is K1 territory regardless of title year (Section 3.6).

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Frame:  CB750-2000001 ...   (stamped, right side of steering head)
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Engine: CB750E-2000001 ...  (stamped, raised pad, right rear of crankcase)
Plate:  steering-head ID plate, month/year of manufacture
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- **Numbers should match.** The factory's own machine-identification notes say frame and engine numbers "are usually identical." A mismatch means an engine or frame swap — the single most value-relevant fact about the bike.
- **Model-year vs build-date caution.** K2 production for the US market began with the March 1, 1972 release; the Japanese domestic K2 followed in April 1972. A bike in the 2-million block is a K2 even if first titled later; a bike in the 10-million block titled in 1972 is a late K1. Read the steering-head plate, not the registration.
- **Ordering parts:** Honda's parts books key finishes and some internals to frame/engine number. Always quote the full number including the CB750 / CB750E prefix; for carburetor parts, quote the carb series (657A vs 657B) as well.

4.2 Engine specifications (1972)

Item	Specification
Type	Air-cooled SOHC inline-four, 2 valves per cylinder, chain-driven single overhead camshaft
Displacement	736 cc
Bore × stroke	61 mm × 63 mm (2.40 in × 2.48 in)
Compression ratio	9.0:1
Maximum power	67 hp (50 kW) @ 8,000 rpm
Maximum torque	60 Nm (44 ft-lb) @ 7,000 rpm
Valve train	SOHC, rocker-arm actuated, screw-and-locknut adjustment
Fuel system	4 × 28 mm Keihin carburetors (657A to ~3/72, 657B after); pleated paper air-filter element
Lubrication	Dry sump
Ignition	12V battery-and-coil, twin breaker points (1–4, 2–3), mechanical centrifugal advancer
Starting	Electric starter and kick starter
Redline	8,000 rpm (tachometer)
Claimed top speed	~123–125 mph (period figures vary by source)
Standing ¼ mile	~13.5 sec @ ~101 mph (period figure)

Valve clearances (engine cold): inlet **0.002 in**, exhaust **0.003 in**. (Beware: some online sources misprint these in millimeters — at 2 mm the engine would sound, in one restorer's phrase, like an army of dwarves with pickaxes. The specification is thousandths of an inch.)

Bottom-end notes for the rebuilder: The SOHC crankshaft runs in plain bearings in a vertically split crankcase; the K2's bottom end is the mature, debugged version of the design — the sandcast-era crankcase and oiling revisions are all behind it. Standard practice on a full rebuild: inspect the crankshaft journals, fit new plain bearings to clearance, replace the cam chain and tensioner components, and confirm oil-pump output. The K2 standardized exhaust valve-guide seals on all eight valves — if the head is apart, fit seals to the K2 specification rather than the mixed K0/K1 practice.

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