

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

Vintage Motorcycle Restoration Master Checklist

Read these pages exactly as they appear in the full guide.
Nothing here is rewritten or summarised — it is the product itself,
so you can judge the depth before you spend a dollar.

The full guide: <https://ironheadguides.com/product/IH-MASTER-CHECKLIST>

IronHead — instant PDF download after checkout.

IRONHEAD

Master Restoration Checklist

The nut-and-bolt checklist for vintage motorcycle restoration — any make, any year

12	phases, assessment to final inspection
127	hands-on checkpoints with sign-off boxes
1	binder-ready system: print it, check it, file it

Digital PDF • Instant download • ironheadguides.com

How to use this checklist

Print it, put it in a binder, and work it phase by phase. Each checkpoint has a box — check it off only when the work is actually done and verified, not when it's 'close enough.'

The checklist follows the order a real motorcycle restoration runs: assess, plan, tear down, frame and bodywork, paint, rolling chassis, engine, carburetion, electrical, brakes and final drive, reassembly, first start, final inspection.

Model-specific numbers — clearances, torque figures, jet sizes — always come from the workshop manual for your bike; this checklist makes sure nothing gets skipped on the way.

Write dates and initials next to completed phases. When the bike is done, this checked-off document goes in the binder with your receipts, measurements, and photos — it's part of the bike's provenance and value.

One rule covers everything: **when in doubt, stop and verify**. The most expensive mistakes in restoration are the ones discovered two phases too late.

PHASE 1 OF 12

ASSESSMENT & DOCUMENTATION*Do this before a single wrench turns. Everything downstream depends on what you record now.*

- ☐ Photograph the bike from both sides, front, rear, top, and underneath — minimum 80 photos, dated, before anything comes apart.
- ☐ Record the frame number, engine number, and gearbox number (where separate). Photograph every stamping in place.
- ☐ Confirm the title matches the frame number and is transferable into your name **before** spending a dollar on parts.
- ☐ Establish matching-numbers status: engine, frame, and major cases against the maker's records for the year.
- ☐ Photograph every factory decal, paint stripe, inspection mark, and grease-pencil notation — placement references you cannot buy later.
- ☐ Grade overall condition on a 1–6 scale and write it down. This sets the target: rider, show, or concours.
- ☐ Check for prior crash repair: misaligned steering head, stretched or welded lugs, bent fork sliders, mismatched fasteners.
- ☐ Map corrosion: frame tubes, tank interior, fender undersides, exhaust, and every chrome surface, pit by pit.
- ☐ Baseline the engine before teardown: compression test and leak-down numbers recorded, cylinder by cylinder.
- ☐ Drain a sample of engine oil into a clean pan and inspect for metal flake, fuel, and water.
- ☐ Start a build binder now: one section per system, plastic sleeves for every receipt and photo print.
- ☐ List what's missing outright — airbox, side covers, exhaust, instruments. Missing parts cost more than worn ones.

Shop tip: The camera is the cheapest tool in the shop. A photo of how a cable was routed is worth an hour of head-scratching in Phase 11.

PHASE 2 OF 12

PLANNING & BUDGET

A restoration without a plan is just expensive disassembly.

- ☐ Define the target in writing: daily rider, weekend show bike, or concours. Every decision flows from this.
- ☐ Research correct finishes, fasteners, decals, and part numbers for your exact year and model before buying anything.
- ☐ Price the big five first: engine machine work, paint, chrome plating, wheels and tires, seat and rubber.
- ☐ Add a 25–30% contingency on top. Seized fasteners and cracked cases always hide in a vintage bike.
- ☐ Decide DIY vs. outsource for each system — and book the good machine shops early; they all have wait lists.
- ☐ Build a parts-sourcing list with quality tiers: NOS, quality reproduction, and donor-bike parts.
- ☐ Decide the originality line now: which non-original upgrades (electronic ignition, modern tires) are acceptable on this build — in writing.
- ☐ Set a realistic timeline with milestones, not a single distant deadline.
- ☐ Arrange dry, secure storage for the tank, painted parts, and brightwork before teardown begins.
- ☐ Confirm the workshop manual for the exact year and model is in hand — torque specs and clearances come from it, never from memory.

Shop tip: A 'cheap' vintage bike with no title, no airbox, and a stuck engine is the most expensive bike you will ever own. The plan is what keeps it honest.

PHASE 3 OF 12

TEARDOWN & CATALOGING*Teardown is documentation, not demolition.*

- ☐ Drain all fluids (engine, gearbox, primary, forks, fuel) into labeled pans and note what each one looked like.
- ☐ Photograph every assembly before removal — cable routing, hose routing, wiring runs, clip positions.
- ☐ Bag and tag every fastener by assembly as it comes off. One assembly, one bag, one label.
- ☐ Measure and record before removal: fork tube height above the top clamp, handlebar position, chain slack, shock length.
- ☐ Keep every washer, spacer, and shim in removal order on a labeled wire or dowel — orientation matters.
- ☐ Start a running parts inventory: part, condition, and a reuse / rebuild / replace decision for every component.
- ☐ Mark every electrical connector with a numbered tag pair before unplugging it.
- ☐ Photograph engine internals as they come apart — cam timing marks, piston crowns, clutch stack order.
- ☐ Record every bearing, seal, and bushing part number and measured size before pressing anything out.
- ☐ Note which fasteners fought, snapped, or came out with thread inserts — the reassembly shopping list starts here.
- ☐ Stop at the bare frame and bottom end only when you have a reason to go further: 'while I'm in there' is not a reason.

Shop tip: *The bike you can reassemble is the one you photographed coming apart. Ten minutes of tags saves ten hours of guessing.*

PHASE 4 OF 12

FRAME, TANK & BODYWORK*Paint is the reward for finished metalwork — this phase earns it.*

- ☐ String-test or jig-check frame alignment: steering head to swingarm pivot, both sides measured and recorded.
- ☐ Inspect steering head races and the swingarm pivot for pitting, play, and ovality.
- ☐ Probe frame tubes for internal rust at the low points; check every weld and lug for cracks with a magnifier.
- ☐ Repair metal before any paint discussion: cracks welded, dents worked, brackets straightened.
- ☐ Strip the tank and inspect inside with a light and mirror: rust scale, old sealer, pinholes at the seams.
- ☐ Decide the tank treatment in writing: clean and run bare, line it, or send it out — and pressure-test it after.
- ☐ Check fenders, side covers, and the headlamp shell for cracks at every mounting tab — the classic failure points.
- ☐ Test-fit all bodywork on the bare frame before paint: tank, seat, fenders, covers, with correct mounting rubbers.
- ☐ Verify the seat pan: collapsed foam or a rusted pan means a rebuild, not a cover stretched over rot.
- ☐ Record the original paint code and stripe/decals placement measurements from your Phase 1 photos.

Shop tip: Any defect you can feel with a fingertip will shout through fresh paint. Finish the metal, then finish the finish.