

Say Hello to the C4: Buying Your First (or next) Corvette

The C4 Corvette is a great gateway into the Corvette ownership experience. The price is right, it has miles of potential for upgrades and projects, and it will usher you into a lifelong association with the Corvette hobby. Mid America Motorworks addresses first time buyers, as well as those experienced in purchasing Corvettes, to provide valuable insight into the C4 Corvette.

Pre-planning Your Purchase

Finding a C4 Corvette is a little different than heading to your local car dealership. Savvy shoppers will become familiar with local Corvette Clubs and forums, where Corvettes are featured. Before you start shopping, do your research and put together a checklist of features you want or wish to avoid. Look at as many cars as possible. Don't let your emotions guide your decisions.

Budget

How much do you have to spend? How much maintenance can you afford? Don't forget insurance costs and storage fees.

Repairs

Are you handy in the garage? Is there a local mechanic or shop that can handle repairs and projects that are beyond your skill level?

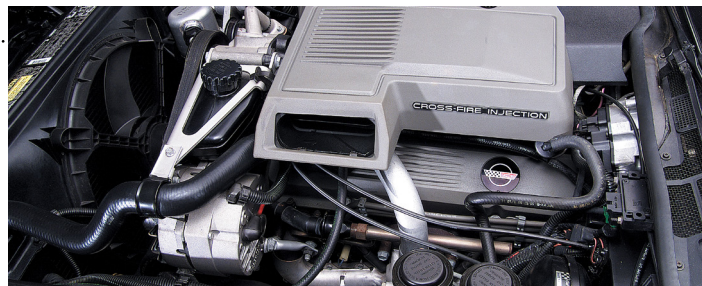
Corvette Clubs

Talk to Clubs in your area. Most owners love to share information with prospective buyers. There may also be cars or projects for sale within the Club that are not advertised. Once you make a purchase, Clubs are another great source for tips on repair and restoration.

C4 Corvette Breakdown - Pros & Cons Per Year

1984 Pros:

- The first passenger car to excel on the skid pad pulling 1 g.
- Extensive use of electronic sensors for the engine and drive train.
- Modern design offered better performance & fuel economy





- New style included first use of large, one-piece glass top
- Easy parts to find: interior, exterior parts and chassis items

1984 Cons:

- Retained Cross-fire injection system from 1982
- Digital dash was rather fault-prone
- Overdrive could not withstand hard driving and often failed
- Performance limitations on the L-83
- Z51 offered a bone-jarring ride
- Some brake and engine management/fuel delivery parts are difficult to find
- Delco-Bose stereo system wasn't compatible with most aftermarket components and often failed
- Difficult parts to find: transmission parts, which can be pricey



1985 Pros:

- Tuned port injection
- New suspension tuning offered a better ride
- Improved brakes and rear axle
- Easy parts to find: automatic transmission, suspension, wheels and interior trim

1985 Cons:

- Rough shifts with the 700R automatic transmission and trouble with 4+3 manual transmission
- Weak fuel management system
- Rough ride with the Z51 option
- Difficult parts to find: 4+3 transmission, headlight motors, original glass tops, original style Goodyear tires

1986 Pros:

- Offered both Coupe and Convertible (all Convertibles were Indy Pace Cars)
- Improved fuel management system
- Added third brake light, new ABS brakes, tuned suspension, VATS security system and adjustable spring ratios
- Glass tops available in various colors
- Easy parts to find: interior trim, suspension components, engines, automatic transmission



1986 Cons:

- Limited availability for aluminum cylinder heads
- Weak automatic transmission
- Shifter problems with 4+3 transmission in performance applications
- Plastic interior trim was prone to breakage
- ABS brakes caused problems
- Difficult parts to find: original body decal kits, original correct tires, factory exhaust system, anti-lock brake system pieces, dashboard





1987 Pros:

- Introduction of the RPO Z52 sport handling package
- Callaway Corvette available as a performance alternative
- Introduction of climate control HVAC and heated mirrors
- Easy parts to find: interior and exterior trim, suspension parts, emblems

1987 Cons:

- 4+3 transmission
- Same interior and wheels as earlier C4 Corvette
- Difficult parts to find: wheels, sport seats, controls and internal parts, Delco-Bose stereo components, console parts, original exhaust system



1988 Pros:

- Special 35th Anniversary Edition
- Zero Scrub Suspension made for this new car
- Callaway option available; 50 cars converted to Challenge Racing Corvettes
- Dual power seats and Z52 top option available
- New aluminum 17-inch wheels
- Easy parts to find: 17-inch wheels, suspension parts, engines, automatic transmissions, interior and exterior trim

1988 Cons:

- Interior was unchanged
- 4+3 transmission still offered
- Difficult parts to find: 16-inch wheels, 4+3 transmission, OE glass tops, sport seat controls, internal parts, electronic air conditioning controls, Delco-Bose components

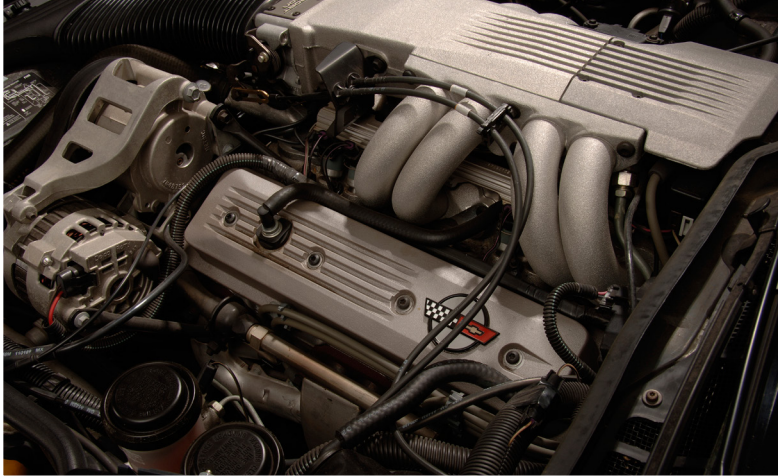
1989 Pros:

- New ZF manual transmission
- Adjustable FX-3 suspension
- Return of the hardtop option
- Callaway available with 60 Challenge Series Corvettes built
- Limited exterior color choices
- New low tire pressure system and restyled seats
- Easy parts to find: transmissions, engines, wheels, suspension parts, interior and exterior trim

1989 Cons:

- Same interior options
- No performance engine options
- Stereos not compatible with available aftermarket products
- Difficult parts to find: OE glass tops, Delco-Bose stereo components, dash/gauge sets



**1990 Pros:**

- New aircraft-style cockpit design
- New dash and return of the glove box
- Special interested Corvettes included the ZR1, 23 Limited Edition R9G World Challenge Corvettes, Indy Festival Track Corvettes
- LT5 Lotus developmental engine debuted
- New aluminum wheels
- First year for the airbag in the Corvette steering wheel
- Easy parts to find: wheels, transmissions, suspension pieces, interior and exterior trim

1990 Cons:

- Narrow seating
- Difficult parts to find: sport seat parts, ABS brake parts, body belt-line trim, air conditioning controls

1991 Pros:

- New ZR1-inspired front and rear fascia
- More Callaway options
- New color beltline trim available
- Introduction of the Z07 suspension system
- New blue glass top
- Easy parts to find: base engines, transmissions, suspension pieces, lights and lenses, interior and exterior trim

1991 Cons:

- Softened appearance of wheels
- Difficult parts to find: ZR1 engine and body parts, ZR1 wheels, dash components and gauges, air conditioning controls, headlight motors, Delco-Bose stereo components

**1992 Pros:**

- Introduction of the EMC, a computer that controlled fuel injection
- Introduction of ASR, or Acceleration Slip Regulation (traction control)
- New GSC Goodyear tire series
- Introduction of the LT1, a completely new small block engine
- Introduction of reverse flow cooling and Optic spark ignition
- Easy parts to find: base engines, transmissions, most suspension pieces, interior and exterior trim and wheels



**1992 Cons:**

- Large high sills, so “up and over” is the only exit strategy
- Optic spark ignition issues
- Difficult to find parts: adjustable suspension, some gauges, Delco-Bose stereo components, sport seat parts and bladders, ZR1 engine, body parts and windshield

1993 Pros:

- 40th Anniversary Corvette with special package and emblems
- 245 rare ZR1 40th Anniversary Corvettes were built
- New interior enhancements
- Passive key entry
- New machined look wheel finish
- Easy parts to find: suspension items, base engines, transmissions, interior and exterior trim, lights and lenses

**1993 Cons:**

- Original window and door seals degraded quickly
- Difficult parts to find: sport seats, Delco-Bose stereo components, stock power antennas, original Goodyear tires

1994 Pros:

- Featured parade car for the inaugural Indy Brickyard 400 – 25 special commemorative Corvettes were made
- New, non-directional, five-spoke wheels added to the ZR1 models
- Automatic transmission was redesigned for improved shift quality and rpm shift-point consistency
- Upgraded ignition system reduced engine start times, especially in cold weather
- Easy parts to find: base LT1 engines, transmissions, suspension systems, trim items, lights and lenses

**1994 Cons:**

- Difficult parts to find: original hardtops, sport seat components, ZR1 parts, Z07 suspension pieces, Delco-Bose components

**1995 Pros:**

- Served as Indianapolis 500 Pace Car
- Large brake package came standard
- Change to side grille styling
- Easy parts to find: interior and exterior trim, base engines, wheels, transmissions, suspension components

1995 Cons:

- Final year for the ZR1
- Difficult parts to find: GM hardtops, ZR1 parts and trim, Z07 suspension components, rear antennas, Delco-Bose stereos, Goodyear tires



**1996 Pros:**

- Special Grand Sport package
- Collector's Edition trim package
- Performance package available
- LT4 engine option equipped with 6-speed transmissions
- 3 aluminum wheel styles available
- Real-time suspension dampening was available
- Easy parts to find: LT1 engines, transmissions, suspension parts, interior and exterior trim, lights and lenses

1996 Cons:

- Difficult parts to find: original Grand Sport edition wheels, Collector Edition wheels, LT4 engines, hardtops and ECM computers



The C4 Corvette is a great entry level car, and a great project car for the enthusiast who still wants to drive a Corvette while one is in the garage. With the year ranges and special editions covered by the 4th Generation, there are still plenty of options for your next Corvette.

