

## 1961

A number of major changes marked the 1961 model year, and foremost was the restyled rear end. Adapted from the XP-700 show car, the 1961 rear end was lower and less rounded than preceding models. A horizontal "crease" bisected the rear panels from atop one rear wheel across the rear fascia to the other wheel well. The remodeled rear end allowed for 20 percent more trunk space. Four recessed taillights were added just below the crease, an innovation that became another Corvette trademark. The license plate was also recessed, flanked by chrome bumperettes.



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Up front, chrome surrounding the quad headlights was eliminated. The traditional "toothy" grill disappeared in favor of an anodized rectangular angular mesh insert. Block letters mounted above the grill spelled out "CORVETTE." It was also the last year for two unique Corvette features - the contrasting two-tone side cove available since 1956 and the 283 cubic-inch engine which had been standard since 1957. There were power boosting options, however, that generated 275 and 315 horsepower from the stock block. Also, more use of aluminum components further reduced bulk weight.

Another minor change was reduced dimensions for the transmission tunnel that allowed for more leg room. Windshield washers, sunshades, parking brake warning light, temperature-controlled radiator fan and courtesy light became standard features. Exhaust pipes were redesigned to exit below the body behind the wheels instead of through the rear body panel or rear bumper, and wide whitewall tires would become history.

Factory production climbed to 10,939 units and the 1961 was the last Corvette to retail for under \$4,000 (\$3,934 for the basic car).

Corvette continued to show its competitiveness on the track, capturing the SCCA Class B/Production points championship. Porsche, which offered the stiffest challenge, placed fifth.

1961 was also the year that the Sting Ray made its debut at the Chicago Auto Show. Two years earlier, GM's Bill Mitchell had made the Sting Ray his personal vehicle for style testing. The prototype made its first public appearance in 1959 at Maryland's Marlboro Raceway where Dick Thompson drove it to a fourth place finish in the President's Club Race.