

A few months back, we had the opportunity to be involved in a 1972 Chevelle Malibu to a Super Sport conversion. The vehicle had much of the conversion completed already, but needed to have a floor shifter with console, a Super Sport dash and SS gauge package. We made our life little easier by ordering the floor console/shifter kit, the SS style dash and Dakota Digital instrument system from Original Parts Group. The kit saved us the time and hassle of figuring out what parts we needed for this job because it comes with the shifter, console, and the majority of parts needed to get the switch-over done.

This Chevelle was done in a retro rod style with the original SS look but with modern conveniences of power windows, power door locks, and remote keyless entry to name a few. To keep with this theme, it was necessary to upgrade the standard rectangular Malibu instrument system to an SS dash assembly. To keep a clean, updated look with all necessary gauges we used the Dakota Digital kit for the 1970- 72 Chevelle SS as a simple, cost effective way to upgrade the old style instrument system. The Dakota Digital Super Sport gauges are a bolt-in package that provides speed, tach, voltage, oil pressure, water temperature, and fuel level all in the existing SS instrument location. In addition to these gauges, this instrument setup also displays high speed recall, high RPM recall, 1/4 mile timer, ¼ mile speed, turn signals, high beam, check engine, parking brake, and cruise control (*when equipped*).

Our one stop shop complete with knowledgeable staff at “Original Parts Group” made ordering all the necessary parts a snap. One of the first things we did when the parts arrived was to open all of the boxes and lay out the products to make sure we had everything we needed to do the installation. We then disconnected the battery which is a safety precaution that should be done before any type of installation. Next, we planned out the installation with the help of the documentation supplied with the parts.

We decided to start at the transmission tunnel area first. The carpet in the transmission tunnel area needed to be removed for the shifter installation, so we set the shifter on the hump, made some measurements, marked the carpet and removed the necessary piece. We then measured and bolted in the horseshoe shifter after marking and drilling the hole for the floor shift cable. Once done, we were able to connect the cable to the shifter and route the cable through the tunnel to connect to the transmission.



Next, we bolted the shifter cable bracket to the transmission, (make sure to choose the correct type for your transmission model), and connected the shifter cable to the transmission bracket and linkage. Then we checked and adjusted the shifter so each detent in the shifter mechanism corresponded to the gear selected on the transmission. This was easily adjusted via the slot where the shifter cable connects to the shifter.





While we were at the transmission connecting the shifter linkage kit and cable, we disconnected the speedometer cable and installed the signal generator (included with the instrument kit) to the speedometer cable output. The speedometer signal generator came with a short wiring pigtail which required us to add enough wire to the generator to reach the gauge console.

The next step was to bring the wires from the signal generator into the engine compartment area, securing along the way making sure to keep it away from heat sources, distributor or coils. In order for the Oil Pressure and the Water Temperature to read accurately, the instrument system comes with new sensors for each reading.



The sensors are easily installed in the stock engine locations and even come with brass bushings to adapt to different size fittings for the water temperature. We opted to replace the original wires from the sensors to the instrument system, so we cut the appropriate length of wire routed them neatly through the engine compartment.

The tachometer connection was made next. This particular vehicle had an aftermarket ignition system so we located the tachometer connection near the distributor and cut a length of wire that would reach the instrument system and made the connection. We then secured the wires we extended from the sender/sensors to the factory wiring harness, and brought the wires into the gauge area through the firewall.

Now it was time to remove the old dash assembly. The first step in this procedure was to remove the dash pad. The dash pad has four screws that secure it that go up from above the gauge viewing area.



Two screws were also located in the glove box and go up to the dash pad from upper edge of the glove box opening.

Once we removed these six screws the dash pad was easily removed with a gentle pull.



Because the '70-'72 Chevelle gauge cluster and bezel are part of the lower dash assembly, it's necessary to unbolt and remove the entire lower dash assembly to replace it with the SS style. The lower dash is secured at both sides, the middle, under the dash, under the steering column, behind the ashtray area, and on the top toward the middle. Having the dash pad removed first, we were able to access the necessary bolts starting with the top side bolts:



To make removal of the lower dash easier we lowered the steering column by removing the 4 screws on the lower plastic steering column cover and removed the cover. To lower the column we need to then remove the 2 nuts and column bracket which secured the steering column.

After being careful to not let the steering column slam to the floor we were able to access the bolt located behind the column. (highlighted in photo)



Now it was time to remove the 2 lower, outside dash bolts:



And then the upper middle bolts above the instrument panel and glove box:



Next, we gently let the dash down to rest on the transmission hump to access all the wire connections and heater control connections which needed to be disconnected.



Once all of the remaining connections, heater controls, and heater duct work were disconnected, we completely removed the lower dash assembly.



It was now time to prepare the new dash assembly. We bolted in the new digital instrument panel, headlight switch, wiper switch and heater control unit.

Next, we chose a location to install the control unit which is a compact enclosure that serves as the brain of the digital system and contains all the electrical connections that are needed for the system. We decided the unit would fit behind the radio cavity and would be easy to access if needed later on when the dash was installed. With the dash out of the way and the control unit handy we wired in all the connections for the speed, tach, oil, water, fuel, volts, blinkers, high beam, ground, and switched 12VDC power, set buttons and ribbon cable for the instrument system.



Once all of the connections to the control unit were complete, we set the new dash assembly in place, and connected the harnesses and wires for the headlight switch, wiper switch, cigarette lighter assembly, and heater controls.



It was now time to bolt the dash back into its original location. We started by securing the upper bolts to the original brackets first making sure to leave them only hand tight so we could easily make any adjustments later. Then we continued hand tightening the remaining bolts to the dash and carefully reinstalled the heater duct work.



Once all the bolts were installed, we made some final adjustments to make sure the lower dash was aligned with the firewall, and then tightened the bolts. Next, we installed the dash pad, glove box door, ashtray assembly using the same method in which the old parts were removed.



After reconnecting the battery, we turned on the ignition switch and were greeted by a new SS dash and vibrant blue display.





OPG Parts List:

- S6872M Complete console kit w/shifter
- CH23644 70-72 Dash Housing
- CH22081 70-72 Glove Box Door
- GL10950 Glove Box Lamp Kit
- CH22080 70-72 SS Dash Ash Tray
- CH26992 71-72 Cig Lighter Housing
- CH26530 71-72 Cig Lighter
- PZ00003 Glove Box Lock Casing
- KK26038 70-77 Original Glove Box Lock
- CHV4576 70-72 "SS" Steering Column Cover
- CH24950 68-72 GM Floor Shift Cable
- KM02017 Trans Cable Bracket
- KK26070 70-72 Original Style Console Lock
- 11925 68-72 Console Harness w/Automatic
- KM02040 Neutral Safety Switch
- CH26487 1970-72 Chevelle / El Camino Digital SS Gauge Cluster & Housing