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1978 Sportster

Model Production Numbers

- XLH 1000 11,271
- XLH 1000 (75th Anniversary Model) 2,323
- XLCH 1000 2,758
- XLT 1000 (Touring) 6
- XLS 1000 (Roadster) 2
- XLCR 1000
- XR-750 83 ¹⁾

Colors

- Birch White, Vivid Black, Brilliant Red, Charcoal Silver, Arctic White, Concord Blue, Chestnut Brown and Black Cherry.

Vehicle Identification

Frame VIN Numbers

Starting in 1970, the only numbers used for the purpose of identification are on the right neck and frame downtube.

- The frame is stamped with a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) identification.
- There are still other stampings on the different parts of the frame combined with certain features that can be used to date the frame.
But the only numbers used to identify the entire bike for ownership purposes is the VIN number stamped in the right side neck.
- In addition to the neck VIN, an identification label is located on the frame giving the VIN and date of manufacture.
This label was required by law for identification. ²⁾
- The serial number is the 3rd through the 7th digit. All serial numbers run consecutively regardless of model year. ³⁾

[Click Here](#) to view Ironhead Frame Identification in the Sportsterpedia for more information.

[Click Here](#) for more information on serial numbers and VINs in the Sportsterpedia.

VIN for 1978 Sportsters			
Sportster Model Code (first 2 digits)	Serial Number (next 5 digits)	Manufacturer (second to last digit)	Model Year (last digit)

1C = XR-750 2G = XLT 3A = XLH 4A = XLCH 4E = XLS 7F = XLCR	10,000 and up	H = Harley Davidson	8 - 1978
Example: (3A13675H8) indicates a 1978 XLH and is stamped on the right side engine case and on the frame with the addition of a label on the steering head showing the VIN and date of manufacture. ⁴⁾			
Example VIN Reads: 3A13675H8			
3A	13675	H	8

Engine Serial Numbers

The engine serial numbers were still stamped in the case but longer used for identification purpose of ownership on 1970-up model Sportsters.

- The engine VIN is stamped on the right side of the engine crankcase between the cylinders.

Specifications

[Click Here](#) for the main technical menu in the Sportsterpedia.

Also see the "Misc Resources" section on the bottom of that page for technical docs and information.

Model Designations

- XL, XLH, XLCH

The 57-69 service manuals and other literature from HD cover multiple years.

And the 1957-1959 "XL" is included with the information in these manuals up through 1969.

However, the 1970-1978 FSM also includes an "XL" model in the specs but does not refer to the 57-59 XL motorcycle.

Starting in 1977, there were also XLT and XLCR models (these are both included in the "XL" verbiage).

The "XL" noted in 1970 and future literature simply refers to a street legal "Sportster" model motorcycle.

The last XLCH was made in 1979 but both "XL" and "XLH" verbiage was used in manuals and literature up through the 2003 manuals.

(referring to the same bikes).

"XLH" became the mantra for the base 883cc model but the manuals also refer to XLH1100 and XLH1200 Sportsters.

2004-up manuals dropped the "H" altogether. So 2003 is the last year the MoCo referred to a Sportster as an XLH.

Dimensions

- Wheelbase: ⁵⁾
 - XL, XLH, 58-1/2 in / 148.59 cm
 - XLCH, 58-1/2 in / 148.59 cm
- Overall Length:
 - XL, XLH, 87-3/4 in / 222.88 cm
 - XLCH, 87-3/4 in / 222.88 cm
- Overall Width:
 - XL, XLH, 35 in / 88.90 cm
 - XLCH, 35 in / 88.90 cm
- Overall Height:
 - XL, XLH, 48 in / 121.92 cm
 - XLCH, 48 in / 121.92 cm
- Road Clearance:
 - XL, XLH, 7-1/4 in / 18.41 cm ⁶⁾
 - XLCH, 7-1/4 in / 18.41 cm

Engine

- Engine type: 4 cycle Overhead Valves, 45 degree V2
- Hemi-spherical style heads
- Displacement: 60.9 ci / 997.5 cc (1,000 cc advertised)
- Compression Ratio: 9:1
- Bore: 3.188 in / 81 mm
- Stroke: 3.8125 in / 96.8 mm
- Horsepower: 59.5 @ 6,400 RPM ⁷⁾
- Taxable Horsepower: 7.2
- Torque: 52 ft-lb @ 3800 RPM
- 4 Cams
- **Gerotor type oil pump.**
Oil pump pressure (gauge mounted in place of oil pressure switch):
 - Minimum: 3-7 psi (idle)
 - Maximum: 15 psi (60 mph in high gear)
 - Normal riding conditions: 4-15 psi
- **XLH/XLCH Ignition:** Breaker Point and Coil Ignition System (points are in the nose cone in the cam cover)
 - Point Gap: .018"
- Dwell: 140° at 2000 RPM
- Ignition Timing
 - Advanced: 40° (17/32") BTDC
 - Retarded: 10° (1/32") BTDC
- Spark Plugs
 - #4 for break-in.
 - #5 for everyday use and hard service.
 - Gap: .025"- .030"

- **Fuel System:** Keihin (non-cv) Butterfly carburetor.
- **Starter**
 - XLCH: **Kick Start** only.
 - XLH: **Electric Start** only (Prestolite).

Capacities

- **Fuel Capacity:** ⁸⁾
 - XL / XLH fuel tank 4 gal / 15.14 l
 - XLCH fuel tank 2.2 gal / 8.328 l
 - Reserve: .25 gal / .946 l
- **Oil Capacity:** 3 qts. / 2.83 l
- **Transmission Capacity:** 1.5 pints / .71 l

Clutch

- Multi-Disc wet clutch-pack with alternate steel and fiber friction plates.⁹⁾

Drivetrain

- **Constant Mesh** ¹⁰⁾
- **Left Side Shifter**
- **Speeds - 4 Forward**
- **Number of Sprocket Teeth (XL / XLH / XLCH)**
 - Engine: 34
 - Clutch: 59
 - Transmission: 21
 - Rear Wheel: 51
- **Gear Ratios (XLH / XLCH)**
 - 1st: 10.63:1
 - 2nd: 7.70:1
 - 3rd: 5.82:1
 - 4th: 4.22:1

Tires

Starting in 1970 through E1979, Harley Davidson partnered with Goodyear for a new “special” tires and rims for standard “high ground clearance” Sportster models.

Standard or Low Clearance models did not have the “special” rims and use standard tires.

[Click Here](#) for the Ironhead tires and wheels page in the Sportsterpedia for more information.

Tire pressure based on 150 lb rider. When weight is exceeded by 50 lbs or more, increase the rear by 2 lbs and front by 1 lb.

Repeat for each additional 50 lbs of weight. ¹¹⁾

Tires: (both the Special Goodyear and the Yokohama tire brands are all obsolete now)

- Standard Sportster Models;
 - Front 3.25/3.50 x 19
 - Rear 4.00 x 18
- High Ground Clearance Sportster Models: ¹²⁾
 - Front;
 - Goodyear MM90-19T (3.75×19) Sport Rib (tire pressure 18 psi / 1.24 bar) ¹³⁾
 - Rear;
 - Goodyear 4.25×18 All Traction (tire pressure 30 psi / 2.06 bar) ¹⁴⁾
- Low Ground Clearance Models:
 - Front 3.25/3.50 x 19
 - Rear 3.50 x 18

Models

XLCR 1000 Cafe Racer

What is the Current KBB Value? ¹⁵⁾



1978 XLCR 1000 - Last year in production - click to enlarge.
(Original California model with one state only mufflers.) ¹⁶⁾

XLH 1000

What is the Current KBB Value? ¹⁷⁾

XLH 1000 Anniversary

What is the Current KBB Value? ¹⁸⁾

XLCH 1000

What is the Current KBB Value? ¹⁹⁾

- Dual Sport

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1972-2003 HD XR750 Service Manual XR 750 Production Schedule pg 69

2) 3)

HD Service School service bulletin #596 dated September 16, 1969

4)

Shop Dope Service Bulletin #596 dated September 16, 1969

5)

Harley-Davidson 1970 Service Manual

6)

HD 1970-1978 Sportster Service Manual

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Harley-Davidson 1970-1978 Service Manual

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1957-1969 HD FSM pg 4A-3

10)

1970-1978 HD FSM pg 1-1

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Harley-Davidson 1970 - 1977 Service Manual

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15)

<http://www.kbb.com/motorcycles/harley-davidson/xlcr-cafe-racer/1978-harley-davidson-xlcr-cafe-racer/trade-in/>

16)

Photo courtesy of Moon Wolf of the XLFORUM

17)

<http://www.kbb.com/motorcycles/harley-davidson/xlh-sportster-1000/1978-harley-davidson-xlh-sportster-1000/trade-in/>

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<http://www.kbb.com/motorcycles/harley-davidson/xlh-sportster-1000-anniversary/1978-harley-davidson-xlh-sportster-1000-anniversary/trade-in/>

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Last update: **2021/09/15 01:07**

