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1979 Sportster

Model Production Numbers

- XLH 1000 6,525
- XLCH 1000 141
- XLS 1000 Roadster 5,123

Colors

- XLH: Vivid Black, Brilliant Red, Concord Blue, Chestnut Brown. ¹⁾
- XLS: Black/Gray. ²⁾

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.

(except for the MoCos short-lived decision otherwise) See under Engine Serial Numbers below to reference "the 1979 Exception"

- 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. ³⁾
- The serial number is the 3rd through the 7th digit. All serial numbers run consecutively regardless of model year. ⁴⁾

[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.

9 Digit VIN for 1979 Sportsters			
Sportster Model (first 2 digits)	Serial Number (next 5 digits)	Manufacturer (2nd to last digit)	Model Season (last digit)
3A - XLH 4A - XLCH 4E - XLS	10,000 and up	H - (1979 HD)	9 - (1979)

Example (4A 11790 H9) designates a 1979 XLCH 1000, stamped on the engine right case and right side of the steering head on the frame ⁵⁾

Example VIN on Frame Reads: 4A 11790 H9

4A	11790	H	9
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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.

That is, except for the early 1979 VIN debacle by the MoCo.

- From January 9 to February 8, 1979, (1200, 1340 and 1000cc) motorcycles had the VIN stamped on the engine number pad instead.

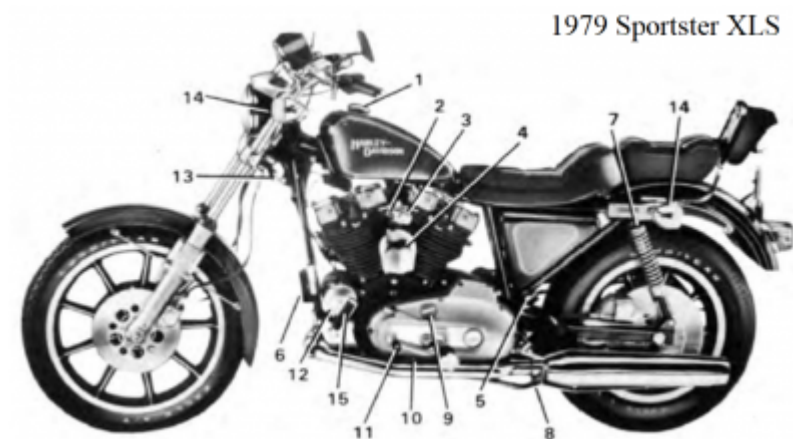
[Click Here](#) for more information on the 1979 Exception in the Sportsterpedia.

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

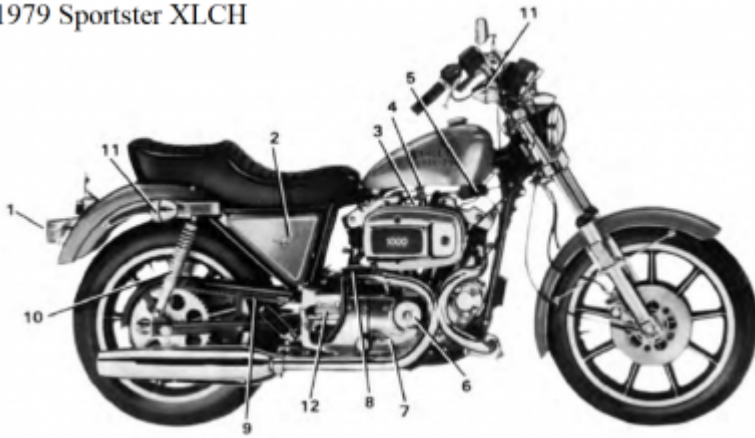
Illustrations

The following illustrations are displayed for historic and period specific parts identification only. Refer to the original OEM documents for additional information. ⁶⁾

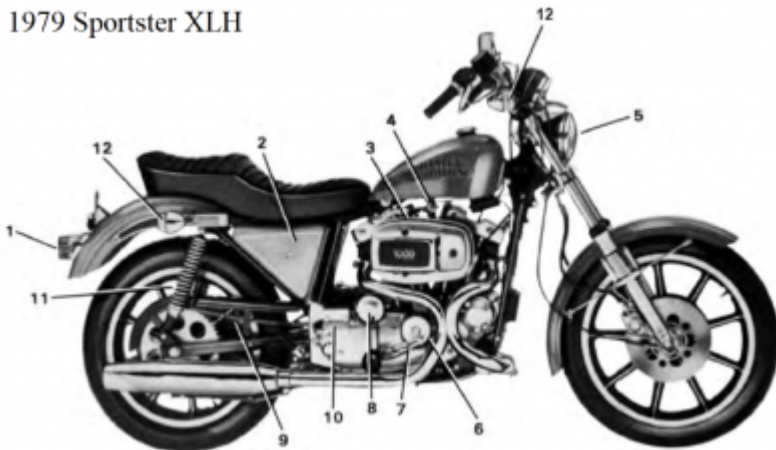
Click on any illustration below to enlarge.



1979 Sportster XLCH



1979 Sportster XLH



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

- Model Designations: XLH-1000, XLCH-1000, XLS-1000

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.

1979-1985 service manual is titled for XL/XR models and the specs in are listed for XLH, XLCH and XLS models.

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

Dimensions

- Wheelbase: ⁷⁾
 - XLH, 58.5 in / 148.59 cm
 - XLCH, 58.5 in / 148.59 cm
 - XLS, 59.6 in / 151.38 cm
- Overall Length:
 - XLH, 88 in / 223.52 cm
 - XLCH, 88 in / 223.52 cm
 - XLS, 89.6 in / 227.58 cm
- Overall Width:
 - XLH, 33.8 in / 85.85 cm ⁸⁾ (1979 XLH,XLCH,XLS-1000 Owners Manual -79A states 33.75 in)
 - XLCH, 33.8 in / 85.85 cm ⁹⁾ (1979 XLH,XLCH,XLS-1000 Owners Manual -79A states 33.75 in)
 - XLS, 29.2 in / 74.16 cm
- Overall Height:
 - XLH, 46.5 in / 118.11 cm
 - XLCH, 46.5 in / 118.11 cm
 - XLS, 42.5 in / 107.95 cm
- Saddle Height:
 - XLH, 29.7 in / 75.43 cm ¹⁰⁾ (1979 XLH,XLCH,XLS-1000 Owners Manual -79A states 29.25 in)
 - XLCH, 29.7 in / 75.43 cm ¹¹⁾ (1979 XLH,XLCH,XLS-1000 Owners Manual -79A states 29.25 in)
 - XLS, 29.7 in / 75.43 cm ¹²⁾ (1979 XLH,XLCH,XLS-1000 Owners Manual -79A states 30.0 in)
- Road Clearance:
 - XLH, 6.9 in / 17.52 cm
 - XLCH, 6.9 in / 17.52 cm
 - XLS, 6.8 in / 17.27 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: 61 @ 6,200 RPM ¹³⁾
- 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: 4-7 psi (idle)
 - Maximum: 10-20 psi (3500 rpm)
 - Normal riding conditions: 4-15 psi
- [Ignition](#): Prestolite Electronic Ignition System (breakerless inductive discharge)
 - Timer Air Gap (ignition rotor to sensor): .004"-.006"
- Ignition Timing
 - Retarded: 10° (1/32") BTDC
 - Automatic Advance: 40° (17/32") BTDC
- Spark Plugs (2):
 - #4 (14mm)
 - Gap: .060"
- [Fuel System](#): Keihin (non-cv) Butterfly carburetor.
- Starter
 - XLCH: [Kick Start](#) only.
 - XLH: [Electric Start](#) only (Prestolite).

Capacities

- Fuel Capacity:
 - XLH / XLCH 2.25 gal / 8.517 l ¹⁴⁾
Reserve: .25 gal / .946 l
 - XLS, 3.6 gal / 13.627 l
Reserve: .60 gal / 2.27 l
- Oil Capacity: 4 qts. / 2.83 l (quoted from -85 FSM)
 - Actual amount on oil change is closer to 2.25 qts [Click Here](#) for more information.
- Transmission Capacity: 1.5 pints / .71 l

Clutch

- Multi-Disc wet clutch-pack with alternate steel and fiber friction plates. ¹⁵⁾

Drivetrain

- Constant Mesh ¹⁶⁾
- Left Side Shifter
- Speeds - 4 Forward
- Number of Sprocket Teeth (XLH / XLCH / XLS)
 - Engine: 34
 - Clutch: 59
 - Transmission: 21
 - Rear Wheel: 51
- Gear Ratios (XLH / XLCH / XLS)
 - 1st: 10.63:1

- 2nd: 7.70:1
- 3rd: 5.82:1
- 4th: 4.22:1

Tires

Early 1979

Starting in 1970 thru 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. ¹⁷⁾

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

Rim size and contour are cast or stamped into the exterior surface of the rim.

- Standard Sportster Models;
 - Front 3.25/3.50 x 19
 - Rear 4.00 x 18
- High Ground Clearance Sportster Models: ¹⁸⁾
 - Front;
 - Goodyear MM90-19T (3.75×19) Sport Rib (tire pressure 18 psi / 1.24 bar) ¹⁹⁾
 - Rear;
 - Goodyear 4.25×18 All Traction (tire pressure 30 psi / 2.06 bar) ²⁰⁾
- Low Ground Clearance Models:
 - Front 3.25/3.50 x 19
 - Rear 3.50 x 18

Late 1979

Wheels with standard rims were now used along with standard sized tires.

- Front:
 - For laced (contour 2.50×19 TLA) or cast (contour 2.15×19 TL) 19” wheels: Goodyear Eagle A/T or Dunlop K181 (MJ90-19).
- Rear
 - For cast (contour 2.50 TL) 18” wheels: Goodyear Eagle A/T (MN90-18).
 - For laced or cast (contour 3.00×16D) 16” wheels: Goodyear Eagle A/T or Dunlop K181 (MT90-16).
- Tire pressure based on overall weight.
 - Up to 300 lb load including rider, passenger and cargo:
 - Front 26 psi / 1.79 bar

- Rear 30 psi / 2.06 bar
- Up to GVWR maximum load:
 - Front 26 psi / 1.79 bar
 - Rear 32 psi / 2.20 bar
- **Caution:** Maximum cold inflated pressure, Front (32psi), Rear (40 psi).

Models

XLH 1000

What is the Current KBB Value? ²¹⁾

XLS 1000 Roadster

What is the Current KBB Value? ²²⁾

XLCH 1000

What is the Current KBB Value? ²³⁾

- Dual Sport
-

Wheels

- All models:
 - Front - 9 spoke cast wheel (assembly #43311-78).²⁴⁾
- XL and XLCH
 - Rear - 9 spoke 18" cast wheel (assembly #40962-79).²⁵⁾
- XLS
 - Rear - 9 spoke 16" cast wheel (assembly #40963-79).²⁶⁾

Back to [Sportster History Index](#)

¹⁾ , ²⁾

1979 Painted Parts List pg 510, 10-82

³⁾ , ⁴⁾

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

⁵⁾ , ²⁴⁾ , ²⁵⁾ , ²⁶⁾

1979 Harley Davidson XLH/XLCH/XLS-1000 Parts Catalog

6)

illustrations from various academic journals

7)

Harley-Davidson 1979-1985 Service Manual

8) , 9) , 10) , 11) , 12)

1979-1985 HD Sportster Service Manual pg 2-1

13)

Harley-Davidson 1979 XLH, XLCH, XLS Owners Manual 99466-79A

14)

Harley-Davidson 1970 - 1978 Service Manual

15)

1957-1969 HD FSM pg 4A-3

16)

1970-1978 HD FSM pg 1-1

17)

Harley-Davidson 1970 - 1977 Service Manual

18) , 19) , 20)

Harley-Davidson 1970 Service Manual pg 1-1

21)

<http://www.kbb.com/motorcycles/harley-davidson/xlh-sportster-1000/1979-harley-davidson-xlh-sportster-1000/trade-in/>

22)

<http://www.kbb.com/motorcycles/harley-davidson/xls-roadster-1000/1979-harley-davidson-xls-roadster-1000/trade-in/>

23)

<http://www.kbb.com/motorcycles/harley-davidson/xlch-sportster-1000/1979-harley-davidson-xlch-sportster-1000/trade-in/>

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