



## Paint Marks—The Basics

### Some Possible Supplies/ Equipment Needed for Reproducing Marks:

- Spray paint. Bristle and sponge types
- Various sized brushes
- Enamel paints
- Mixing container for custom colors.
- Permanent wax markers
- Paint rollers
- Pre-made stamps
- Ink pad(s)
- Tray, pan or other item for custom mixing of paints

Paint marks are an often discussed subject in many restorations circles and online forums. The term “paint marks” can include any marking, applied to a single part, a sub-assembly or a unibody to identify a part, communicate a detail, identify a worker or identify that a process has been completed. The study of paint marks is a subject all its own and seemingly without end if you consider all the possible paint marks that may have been on the car originally, the number of workers assembling and inspecting, sub-assemblies built and the completed car itself, along



with the variables related to the application and the human factor.

Because of the vast number of combinations reflecting all the different years, plants, workers and options, a complete list of correct paint marks for your car is near impossible with any certainty unless you have a remarkably persevered car. When viewed in small numbers many paint marks appear to have been randomly applied, but if you look at large samplings of them from the same source and similar applications, patterns can appear. The purpose of this article is not to show what went where or specific paint mark details but instead a sharing of different types of marks, range of colors used as well as methods and tools you can use to reproduce marks you find on your car.

It should be stressed that a correctly applied paint mark will in no way make up for a missing, an incorrect part, finish or other details on your car.

**NOTE:** Please do not copy or reproduce any paint mark found on the enclosed pages since you have no way of knowing if they relate to your specific car in any way.

## Finding & Collecting Paint Marks

So, where does an owner or restorer begin? The car being restored is the best resource for those marks and details if the car has not been seriously restored or modified in the past. Though age, wear and part replacement can diminish your findings, often many still survive. Your car can be a collection of marks found on many other similar cars but may include some only placed on that one vehicle for some unknown reason. Borrowing marks from other cars is full of issues since you would need to find a vehicle, built at the same time/shift with the exact same options and body style. Not an easy task after all these years. It is important that during the tear-down stage of the restoration that the restorer be on the lookout for signs of marks be they large and obvious or small and partially erased from age.

To assist you in the task of locating and documenting your car's marks, I've included a short list of where some of the typical marks are often found. A mark or evidence of a mark can appear at any step of the restoration process so again be on the look-out during disassembly and cleaning of any part. Of course determining if the part is original to your car, is also part of the task, since replacement parts often had marks on them also. Digital pictures, drawings or tracings can all be used to document and save your findings so that they can be historically replicated again during the restoration.

The following list looks across all years and models so not all of these would be expected to be found on any one model or year.



### BODY

Radiator support (above or below paint layers) headlight buckets, bottom side of hood, underside of fenders, wheel side of the inner fender panels, engine compartment and firewall, interior seat risers, trunk lid, and taillight panel.

### DRIVETRAIN

Sides, rear, or internal surfaces of the engine are all possibilities. Freeze plugs, distributor cases or advances, carburetor bodies, emission parts, rear surface of the intake manifold and exhaust manifolds. Engine mounts, frame mounts, bell housing and transmission. Driveline, transmission yokes, rearend center sections and housings. Shifters and linkage.

### SUSPENSION

Steering components, strut rods, spindles, springs, backing plates, wheel cylinders, calipers, rubber bushings, sway bars, end links and shocks

### ENGINE COMPARTMENT

Battery, upper shock mounts, windshield washer reservoirs, steering boxes, voltage regulators, electrical and radiators.

### TRUNK

Spares tire and wheels, taillight buckets, marker lights, emission equipment.



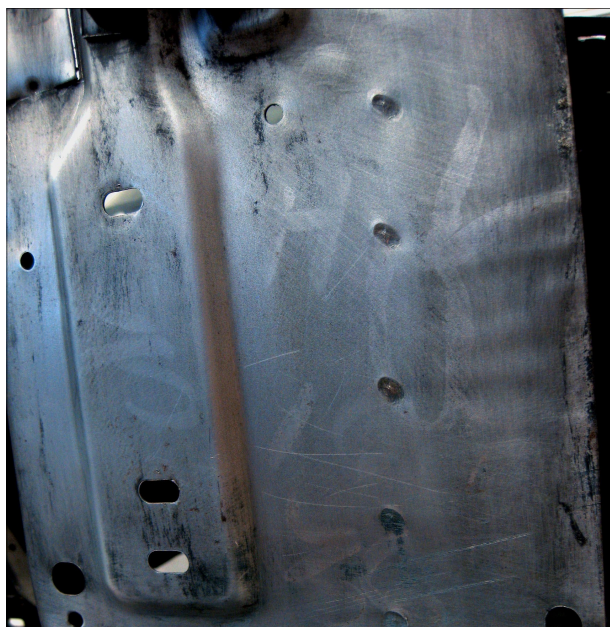




### Finding & Collecting Paint Marks

Sometimes we can quickly recognize the location and the color of a factory marking on a part from our car while other times, the marks can serendipitously appear during the normal cleaning process. Because of this one needs to take a extra little time and be on the look out for differences in finishes or the look of the surface metal that might indicate something lays below. As in the pictures above and the example below.

Many owners have discovered the marks during the cleaning process like what is displayed in the picture at the bottom left of this page. In this case the metal surface was altered when the worker applied the original markings which still remain after decades. If a different method of cleaning this area had been chosen the marks might have been lost forever. In the example below to the left you can see the



faint outline of factory markings on a radiator support. I have found when you have a complex area with allot of writing that it often helps to use different colors, just in the discovery stage, to differentiate between the different markings or groups of markings. This reduces confusing and helps identify individual marks. In my experience it's rare to find this much going on in such a small area of the car as far as markings but wanted to show how busy it can get.

Once you find the location of a possible marking and it is located on a removable part of the vehicle many restorers have found that a product such as Evapo-Rust can revel the original design and colors while removing surface rust and age at the same time. In some cases this requires you to get creative and construct a tank or trough to contain the part and liquid while it does its job but the end results are often very rewarding as demonstrated in the driveline picture shown below.





## Types of Markings Commonly Found

Next, let us look at how these marks were typically applied to parts and items that make up a completed car. Some of these were applied at the supplying plant or subcontractor while others were applied at the Ford auto assembly plant.

The purpose for many of the marks was to allow workers on the assembly line to quickly identify the part, indicate the orientation of the part once installed, the supplier marking, a confirmation of a check/inspection, for accountability or other purposes.

### Daub

Identified as a paint mark applied using a paint brush in a rapid motion, which produced an irregular dot or in some cases a mark with runs from the paint application.

Often found on suspension pieces but also seen on parts like voltage regulators, distributors, vacuum related connections, transmissions as well as other pieces. Could also take the shape and look of a stripe or a unintended shape depending how the worker applied the mark that particular



time. Comparing it to other examples from the same plant and application can help determine original intent.

### Dye

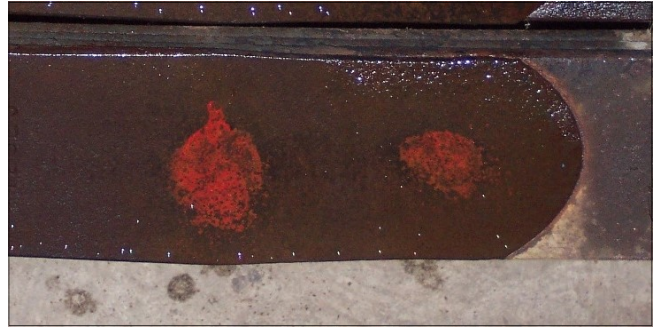


Hardware parts were sometimes dyed to identify them quickly by size and application or to denote an important piece of hardware that Ford wanted workers to pay special attention to. In 1968 Ford added to its practice of including allot of red dyed hardware to remind workers of an important process that often required specific torquing and confirmation. Many of these are related to suspension parts as well as interior part installation.

## Spray

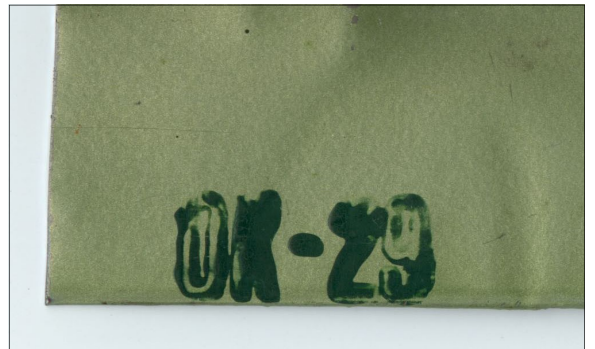
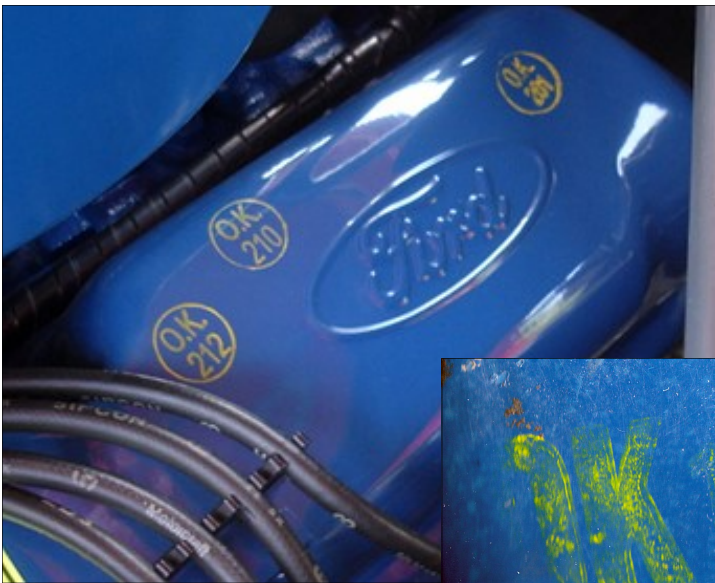
A quick method of applying an identification mark using a paint sprayer or spray can. In some cases runs were produced during the process of applying the paint and may indicate how the item was positioned during application or during the drying process.

Most commonly found as suspension related items and automatic transmission markings.



## Stamp

Often related to, but not always, a completed inspection, test or check. Many times the stamp included an identifier showing the worker's assigned number for accountability. Paint or ink was used depending on the specific application and related details. Stencils can be designed and made to replicate some of the larger types of stamps such as those originally applied to the sheet metal used to form an specific individual part., like a gas tank., mufflers or body panels.



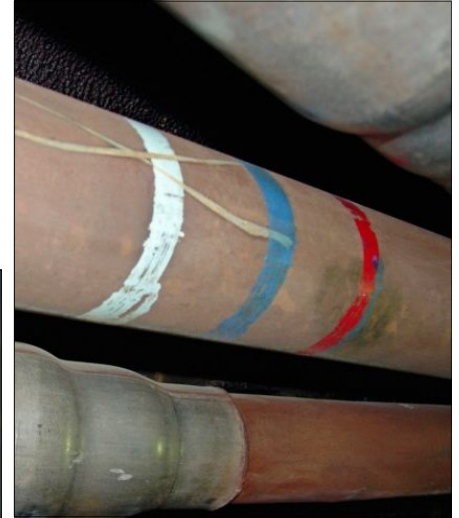


## Stripe

An application of paint used to identify a part or a process. In some cases (example shocks) the mark may have been a daub or a stripe depending on how the worker applied the mark on that piece originally.

In some cases paint runs were produced during the process of applying the paint and may indicate how the item was positioned during application or how it was positioned during the handling and/or drying process.

Most often found on drive train and suspension parts.



## Miscellaneous

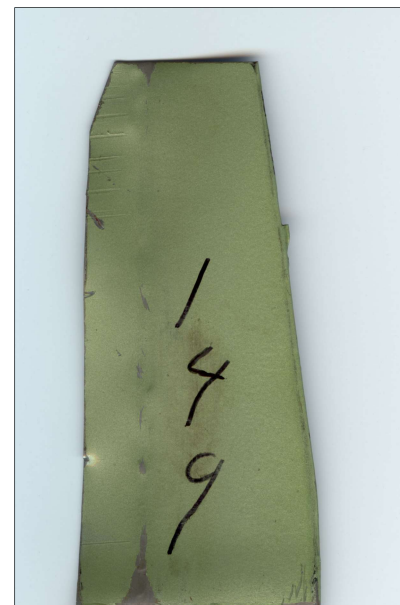


Other methods of identification were sometimes used on certain parts or assemblies. On the example shown to the left the wire wrapped around the upper portion of the spindle identifies this type of spindle from another type and application. Below the green fabric tape serves the same purpose for a different year and application.



## Written

When a simple mark or color would not suffice information was written out in code or shorthand at the sub assembly plant or on the car assembly line. Typically applied with paint brush, permanent crayon, roller applicator or marker normally in a hasty effort. Some identify the part or subassembly while others indicate an inspection or communicate a message to other workers.





# Build sheet Paint Marks

Another great source for standard, typical paint marks for your specific car is your car's build sheet, if your car is a 1967 or later model. In 1967 build sheets started to include color codes to assist workers in quickly locating and identifying the correct part for the car at different installation stations along the assembly line. Workers could now identify (from the build sheet) a shock marked with a red mark, grab it from the bin holding shocks marked red and install that shock in a quick, efficient manner. As the years progressed addition parts were identified by paint or colors on the build sheets. Details, parts and markings did sometimes change during the year so be on the look out for that if your researching a particular car, year or model.

Build sheets for each car were printed at many stations along the line and at some subassembly stations. Due to space on the sheet Ford choose to use abbreviations or codes for the colors applied to the correct part for the application.

On the following pages I've included the codes used on build sheets from 67-73 for Mustang production. In addition I've included examples of the color or the range/variations seen, examples of original marks and any notes related to their usage.

The image displays several examples of Ford Mustang build sheets, which are used to specify parts and paint for each vehicle. The sheets are organized into sections for different car components:

- Engine and Transmission:** Includes fields for engine prefix/suffix (e.g., 23 APEB), transmission (e.g., B), radiator (e.g., C7ZE), and driveshaft (e.g., A).
- Driveshaft and Speedometer:** Details driveshaft prefix/suffix (e.g., H) and speedometer gear (e.g., W1NE7A).
- Suspension and Steering:** Lists steering column (e.g., A), steering wheel (e.g., J1), and wheels (e.g., URA45).
- Front and Rear Components:** Specifies front/rear springs (e.g., GREEN, SILVER), shocks (e.g., RED), and tires (e.g., 151595X14).
- Paint and Color:** A large section for paint marks, including wheel area (e.g., F6Y), tires (e.g., E70), and body panels (e.g., PAA, BFA, AF, C20AHAV).
- Options and Accessories:** Lists various options like air cleaner, fan, steering column, and suspension packages.

At the bottom of the sheets, there are remarks such as "REMARKS: (THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION SUPERSEDES EQUIPMENT REQUESTED ABOVE)".

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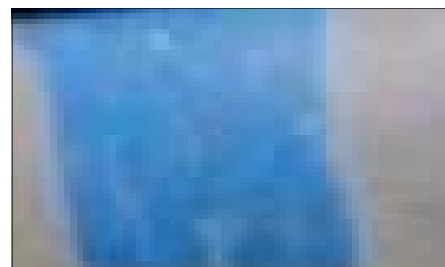


## Color Samples

Below are some of the often found build/broadcast sheet color codes (including abbreviations) for 1967-73 Mustang and their corresponding color chip. We can not assure exact matches due to monitor and other digital settings but have done our best with the medium. In some examples multiple colors are shown to represent colors actually used on original parts associated with these colors and or the range of colors represented with that color.



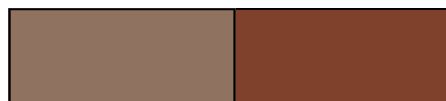
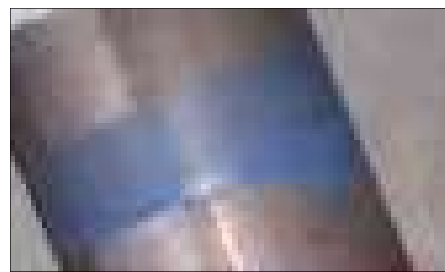
**A - AZUR**  
= Azure



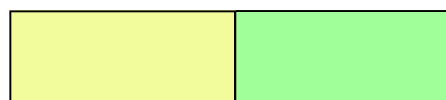
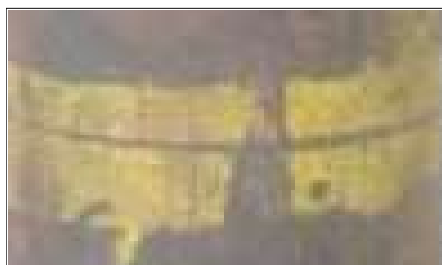
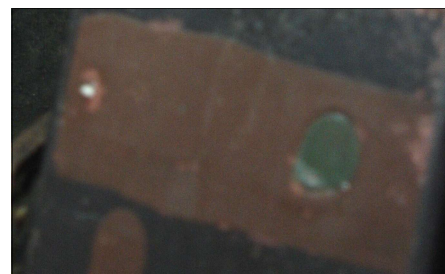
**BK**  
= Black



**B - BU - BLUE**  
= Blue



**B - BN - BR - BRN - BROWN**  
= Brown



**C - CH**  
= Chartreuse





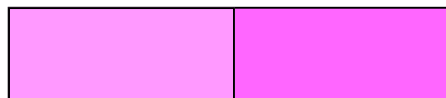
**DB - DBLU**  
**= Dark Blue**

Used when there are two different blues



**DRG**  
**= Dark Green**

Sometimes used when there are two different greens listed



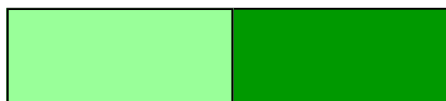
**F = ? (70) Fuchsia**



**GO - GLD - GOLD**  
**= Gold**



**GY - GRY - GRAY**  
**= Gray**



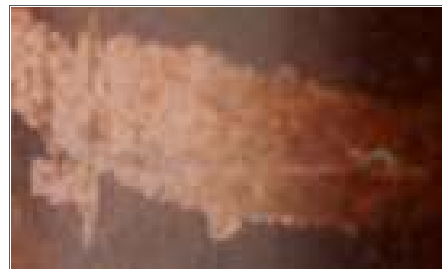
**G - GN - GR - GRN - GREEN**  
**= Green**







**LA**  
= Lavender



**LB -LBLU**  
= Light Blue



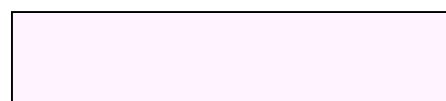
**LGR**  
= Light Green

Used when there are two different greens

No actual original example available currently. Will add in a future update.



**OG - ORG - ORANGE**  
= Orange



**P - PNK - PINK**  
= Pink

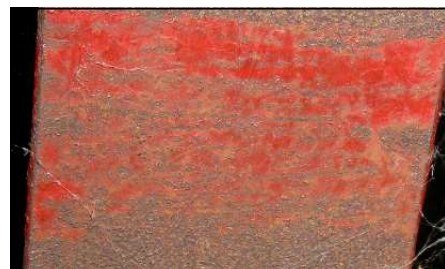




**RD - RED**

**= Red**

Can vary from reddish-brown to true red



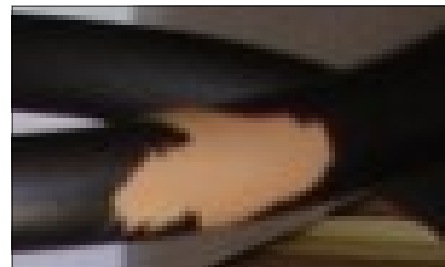
**SIL - SILVER**

**= Silver**



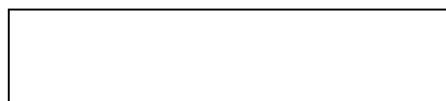
**TN - TAN**

**= Tan**



**V - VI - VIO - VIOL - VIOLET**

**= Violet**



**W - WT - WIT - WHITE**

**= White**



**Y - YE - YL - YEL**

**= Yellow**





## Reproducing Marks

Size and type of mark will guide you to the best tool for the job while your notes and pictures will help you purchase and or mix a color match in the type of paint you've choose. Enamel paints in gloss or semi-gloss will normally be the easiest to find, hold up the best, affordable and closest to what was originally used. For stamps an ink pad, simply applying ink to the stamp using a permanent marker to the stamp or even spraying a page in an old magazine and using that as a stamp pad will work to give you the look and finished look your trying to reproduce.



Since you may choose to use single use brushes, stores like Harbor Freight can provide small model brushes with their thin plastic handles, metal handled acid brushes and even one inch wide wooden handled chip brushes for your use. No real reason to use more expensive horse hair or even fancier art brushes for the task at hand.

Remember, if applying marks to bare or treated metal the marks should be added before a rust preventative is applied. In most cases these oils will not effect the underlying paint and may increase its longevity. Below shows a stencil being applied so that spray ink can be applied to reproduce a factory panel mark.



Sometimes small bottles of model paint (Testor for example) will suffice but for larger areas such as springs one bottle may not be enough or if you have to mix a couple together to create the original color. Foil cups, spray can lids or old muffin tins can be used as small mixing bowls for your purposes. Make sure you mix more than enough paint to do the job if custom mixing. It will likely be very difficult to exactly match the first color if you run out mid-task. Remember that oil based paints will likely hold up longer but require more drying time so plan accordingly.



### Reproducing Marks (Tip)

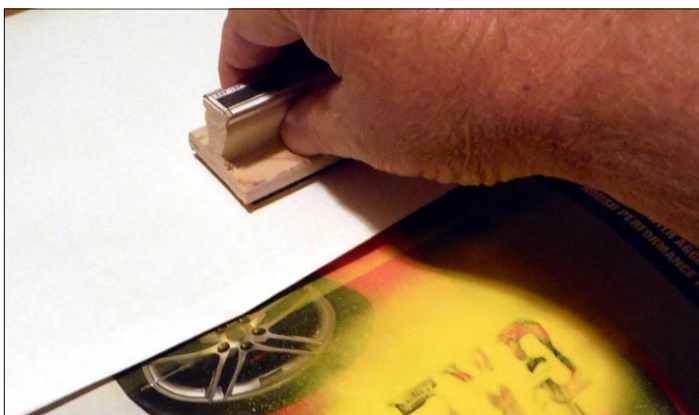
Lack a new unlinked ink pad and your applying a paint type stamp to a part your restoring? Here is a method that has worked for me.

First you will need your chosen paint, the stamp, the part (of course) and an old magazine or catalog with shinny/glossy pages. You may need to arrange your work out of direct sunlight, spray paint will dry quickly in many conditions and consider that any breeze may blow the spray towards an unintended surface or it may blow the pages of the magazine closed before you finish your work.

Next, with everything in apply the paint over approximately a quarter of the surface of a single page..



This will provide you with areas to touch the paint stamp to and test out the amount and coverage of the stamp. Paint will pool in some areas and dry quicker in others so tap the stamp into the paint and stamp another page or a piece of paper until you get an acceptable product/outcome then retap the stamp on the painted page as close as you can to the last time assuring that its an untouched area, then immediately onto the part that needs the stamp.



The stamp does not have to be perfect, few original examples are. Most show areas with heavier or thinner paint applications in the same application.

If your applying to a smooth surface the workers, at times, pressed a little harder, forcing the paint off the mating surfaces of the part to stamp creating a outline pattern we can see on some original examples as shown in the two examples to the left. Not something we see as often on rougher cast pieces but could happen.



## *In Conclusion*

So the search continues for more marks to confirm our past findings, more new discovers to expand our knowledge, more understanding of their purposes and meanings where possible.

It's not always important nor even possible to fully understand all of their purposes at the moment. We continue to meet and talk to workers, some offer answers or clues to their true meanings while others offer information and details related to other subjects.

Consider that reproducing paint marks is not just about adding a daub or a stripe because you saw it in a magazine article or somewhere on the internet but instead honestly reproducing what were found and documented on your particular car, build sheet and/or other trusted documentation to better reflect how these cars looked on day one. Our cars were not built by robots so the nuances reflected in the slight, or more dramatic variations differences between the markings we find add character of these cars and the people who built them.

Remember it is a much, much better to have no markings than to have the wrong one on your car. Its much more important to have the correct parts, finished correctly in place than these small details.

Hope this article has been helpful, enlightening and informative.