HONDA PARTS ONLINE

History Of The Honda Civic

1ST GENERATION THROUGH 10TH GENERATION

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Introduction

As one of America's best-selling cars, the Honda Civic has a lot to offer. Excellent fuel mileage, reliability, and affordability are a few features that make the Civic a perennial favorite of many since it debuted in 1972.

In the 45 years since the Civic began life as a tiny yet practical subcompact car, it grew into a sophisticated sedan loaded with cutting-edge technology. The best part? It remains affordable and reliable as ever. What follows is the Civic's 45-year journey in detail that shows how it came to be the iconic car it is today.

How The Civic Saved Honda

From the time the Honda brand launched in 1946 to the Civic's creation in 1973, Honda was primarily known as a motorcycle manufacturer. They produced cars such as the Japan-based Honda N1300 and N360, but they weren't well received for various reasons including high prices, lackluster styling, and allegations of defects.

Honda considered pulling the plug on automobile manufacturing, but they decided to make one last effort to save the brand. They knew that they needed to do something different this time, which was to design and build a cutting-edge model that not only performed well in all aspects, but also accommodated the growing demand for variety in the Japanese automobile market.

Honda's development team spent a record-shattering two years brainstorming, researching, designing, engineering, and building the ideal car that reflected all the market needs, and they finally introduced it on July 11, 1972. They named it the Civic, which stood for "a car created for citizens and cities".

The Civic's debut in July 1972

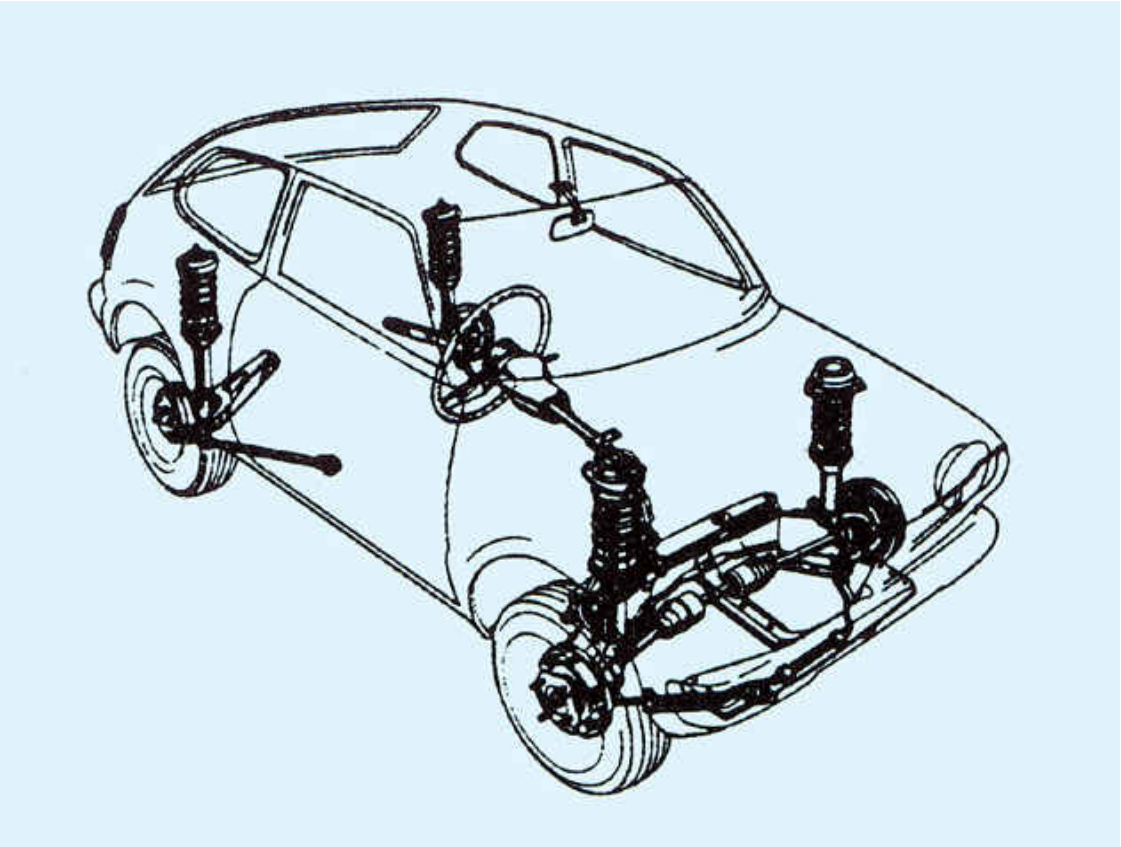
Soon after its debut, the Civic skyrocketed in popularity and changed the landscape not only for Honda, but also for the automobile industry as a whole. Its affordability, reliability, roomy interior, and eventual cutting-edge CVCC technology brought many innovations to the industry, which in turn catapulted Honda to the forefront of automobile engineering and helped Honda turn into the trusted and reliable worldwide automobile brand we all know and love today.

The First Honda Civic: Giving Americans What They Needed

The year 1973 marked the start of a two-year economic recession in the U.S. Fuel became scarce and more expensive, and Americans started ditching muscle cars in favor of fuel-efficient cars. Ford and Chevrolet responded to the shifting market demand by launching more fuel-efficient Pinto and Vega models, respectively, but these cars weren't quite what Americans were looking for.

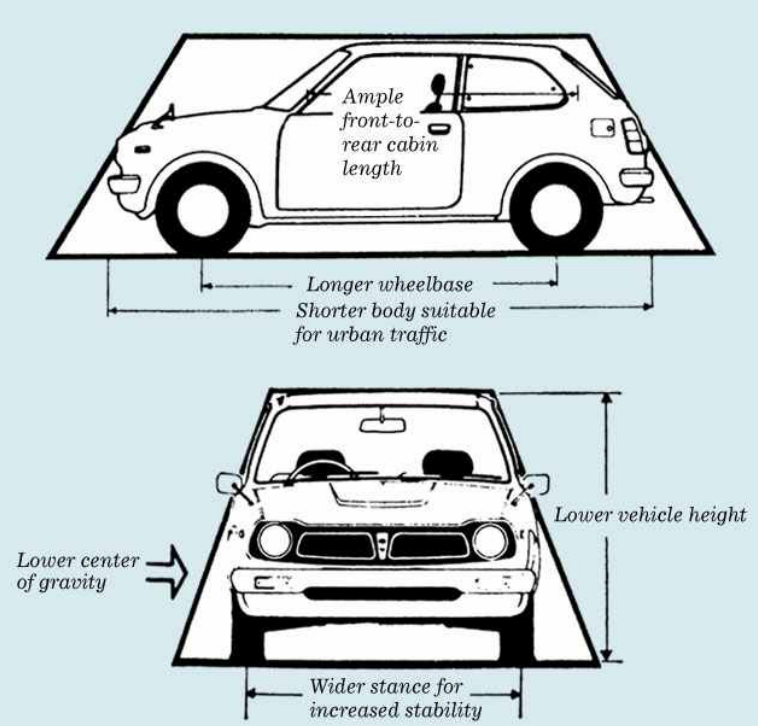
In the meantime, Honda had just completed development of the Civic and then they brought it over to the U.S. The Civic immediately exploded in popularity because, unlike the other subcompact cars on the market, it solved many problems faced by Americans.

In addition to its low base price of about $2,200, the Honda model's ability to run on either leaded or unleaded fuel and to achieve 40 MPG highway mileage lightened the load on the wallet for many Americans. The Civic also came with a roomy interior that could comfortably fit four adults, which was practically a foreign concept in subcompact cars during that time. This was made possible by the Honda development team's decision to eliminate trunk space, mount the 50hp four-cylinder water-cooled engine transversely, install 12-inch wheels, and implement a fully independent strut-type front wheel drive suspension system that removed the need for a rear axle.



The innovative four-wheel independent strut-type suspension system in the first Honda Civic model would later become the standard design in Honda compact and midsize cars.

The unique suspension system also improved the lightweight car's performance. Its maneuverability, stability, and front/rear balance were superior to those of other subcompact cars at the time. This was a big selling point for Americans. Up to this point, buying a subcompact car meant sacrificing performance in favor of value.



The Civic started as a coupe and hatchback, both of which came with a trapezoidal design that assisted in providing optimal performance.

Within five months after the Civic made its debut, Honda sold 21,000 units. The sales number skyrocketed to 80,000 units in 1973.

The first Civic was such a hit that it brought home many awards, including the Japan "Car of the Year" award (sponsored by Motor Fan Magazine) in 1972, 1973, and 1974.

However, it wasn't until 1975 when Honda introduced the low-emission CVCC engine to the American market that the Civic would become one of America's top choices.

Reducing Emissions The Smart Way With The CVCC System

When 1975 rolled around, the United States tightened its emissions standards. Most automakers complied by adding exhaust catalysts to their vehicles, but Honda went the extra mile by introducing a whole new system to the American market: the Compound Vortex Controlled Combustion, also known as the CVCC system. It made its debut in the 1975 Civic 1500 CVCC model.

Offered alongside the base engine, the CVCC engine in the 1975 Civic 1500 produced 53 horsepower and displaced 1488 cc. After the CVCC system came into the picture, Civic sales in America shot up from 43,119 units in 1974 to about 100,000 units in 1975.

Even though this model came with incredibly innovative technology well ahead of its time, Honda was still able to sell it at an affordable base price. This is because their overhead costs were low – due to the opportunity to use existing production facilities and apply the CVCC system to existing reciprocating engines – and they decided to pass the savings on to the consumer.

Little did Honda know that their cutting-edge emission control system would make them a major player in the American automobile market. It also earned the Civic the #1 spot on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's list of America's most fuel-efficient cars in 1977.

The CVCC system, which could be applied to any Honda reciprocating engine, was a novel concept at the time because it didn't require the use of exhaust catalysts or unleaded fuel. A CVCC motor's head design allowed clean, complete combustion to take place internally while still running on leaded fuel. This drastically reduced emissions and gave CVCC engine owners the freedom to choose between leaded and unleaded fuel.

Shortly after its debut, the CVCC system became a worldwide sensation and Honda released its technology to other automakers in an effort to reduce emissions on a larger scale.

Overview Of The First Generation

Even though first-gen Civics are best described as unembellished with only the most basic features available, many consumers still found a lot of value in them. Consumers felt that the first-gen Civics delivered a lot of bang for the buck with their low base price, reliability, fuel economy, low rate of depreciation, and roomy interiors.

During the first few years of this generation, Honda primarily focused on developing the CVCC engine and improving the base engine's performance. Once they had these aspects down pat, they shifted their focus to the cosmetic details and made slight changes to the 1978 model's body. They redesigned the grille, moved the hood vents from the side to the rear, and lowered the turn signals to the bumper.

Top: a 1973 Civic; bottom: a 1979 Civic 1500 CVCC. 1979 Civic photo from order_242.

LINEUP	YEARS AVAILABLE	WHEELBASE	ENGINE OPTIONS
Coupe	1972-1979	86.6”	E Engine
Hatchback	1972-1979	86.6”	E Engine
1500 CVCC	1975-1979	86.6”	CVCC
Station Wagon	1974-1979	89.9”	CVCC
ENGINE OPTIONS	**# OF CYLINDERS**	**HORSEPOWER**	**DISPLACEMENT**
E Engine	4	50-55	1169cc-1488cc
CVCC	4	53-63	1238cc-1488cc
TRANSMISSION OPTIONS			**YEARS AVAILABLE**
Two-speed automatic (Hondamatic)			1972-1979
Four-speed manual			1972-1979
Five-speed manual			1974-1979

The Second Generation: No Longer A Niche Car

Despite the fact that Honda gave the Civic a facelift only a couple years prior, they still did a full model change when its second generation rolled around in 1980.

The new generation of Civics received a sleeker body, a more comfortable interior, a larger wheelbase, an improved suspension system, and better fuel economy. The 1980 model received an EPA rating of 36 city mpg and 49 highway mpg, a 9% increase over the 1979 model. One of the reasons behind the improved performance and enhanced fuel economy in this generation is the fact that Honda tweaked the CVCC design and put it into all the new Civics.

Even though the first generation sported an impressive amount of interior space for a subcompact car, Honda still gave the second generation’s interior 13% more space, width- and length-wise. To increase visibility, Honda also expanded the window area by 20%. The 1980 Civic was so well received that Motor Trend Magazine awarded it the 1980 U.S. Import Car of the Year award.

Honda created the 1980 Civic to represent “1980s values.”

Honda kicked off the second generation with only one body style: hatchback, as they had dropped the two-door sedan from the first generation. Buyers of the 1980 model could choose between a three-door hatchback and a five-door hatchback. However, Honda introduced the four-door sedan and country station wagon body styles in 1981.

In 1982, the Civic underwent another facelift that featured rectangular headlights, a new grille, and larger plastic bumpers.

The 1982 Civic looks noticeably different from the 1980 and 1981 models. 1982 Civic photo courtesy of OSX.

The second generation Civic came with a number of trim levels, the most notable ones being FE (fuel economy) and a sport S trim. Base trim levels got a four-speed manual transmission, while a five-speed manual transmission was reserved for the more luxurious trims. The S trim came into the picture in 1983, and it featured upgraded performance parts such as a firmer suspension system, a rear stabilizer bar, and 13” Michelin tires.

The second generation Civic’s most notable features, depending on the trim level, include a cigarette lighter, a rear window defroster, radial tires, and body side moldings. At this point, Honda realized how much Civic drivers enjoyed the small and nimble nature of the model, so they elected to move the Civic in a sportier direction.

Overview Of The Second Generation

LINEUP	YEARS AVAILABLE	WHEELBASE	ENGINE OPTIONS
Hatchback	1980-1983	89”	CVCC
Sedan	1981-1983	91”	CVCC
Station Wagon	1981-1983	91”	CVCC
ENGINE OPTIONS	**# OF CYLINDERS**	**HORSEPOWER**	**DISPLACEMENT**
CVCC	4	55-67	1335cc-1488cc
TRANSMISSION OPTIONS			**YEARS AVAILABLE**
Two-speed automatic (Hondamatic)			1980
Three-speed automatic (Hondamatic)			1981-1983
Four-speed manual			1980-1983
Five-speed manual			1980-1983

The Third Generation: The Wonder Civic

In 1984, Honda kicked off the third generation with an all new Civic. They decided to redesign the model with the goal of maximizing interior space and minimizing space for the car’s mechanisms. Their revolutionary new design was so successful that it won the European Torino-Piedmonte Car Design Award and Japan’s Car of the Year Award in 1984. Most importantly, the new design made the Civic even more popular.

Honda revolutionized the automobile industry with its third-generation lineup, which includes the hatchback body style carried over from the previous generation.

The 1984 Civic received an extended roof, and its wheelbase grew by five inches. Even though the Civic remained in the subcompact class (until 2000), the new sedan and wagon designs now shared a wheelbase with the Accord and Prelude, both of which were classified as compact cars. Sadly, Honda made the (perhaps difficult) decision to remove the independent rear suspension for a more compact rear suspension system.

All the models in the lineup, except the base three-door hatchback, received an upgraded 1.5L 4-cylinder engine. The base three-door hatchback stuck with the old 1.3L engine.

Honda also ditched the FE trim level, but for a good reason. At this point, the Civic's fuel efficiency was considered great. In fact, the 1984 model came out on top in the fuel efficiency tests conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency.

One of the things that made the third generation so unique is that it's the only generation when the CRX was classified as a Civic. After the generation came to an end in 1987, Honda turned the CRX into its own model.

When 1986 rolled around, Honda gave the Civic minor cosmetic updates, including new wheel cover designs and flush-mounted headlights. In 1987, Honda implemented an automatic 4WD system that allowed the rear wheels to engage automatically once the front wheels lost traction.

The Tall Boy: Not Your Ordinary Station Wagon

For the Civic's third generation, Honda developed three-, four-, and five-door variations. In fact, the body styles were so different from each other that many found them intriguing. Offering radically different body styles in one line up was something no other automaker had done before. The most unique variation was the station wagon, a new body style Honda achieved by merging together the previous generation's station wagon and hatchback models.

The Wagovan was bigger than the typical station wagon at the time, via IFCAR.

The station wagon was formally called the Wagovan, but many fans dubbed it the "tall boy" because of its extra height and the unique design of its rear window area, which were features not found in the previous generation's station wagon. The Wagovan's primary purpose was to provide additional utility space, so Honda designed the wagon's rear seat to slide forward to create extra cargo space in the back.

The tall boy remained in production in the USA until the fourth generation ended in 1991.

Honda's Gift To The World

The third generation saw the introduction of the popular sport compact trim known as the Civic Si, which was originally called the Civic S. The very first U.S.-based Civic S models got a carbureted 1.5L four-cylinder engine that cranked out 85 horsepower. In 1985, Honda rolled out the Civic CRX Si model and a year later the Civic Si hatchback made its debut. All the Si models from 1985 through 1987 were powered by a 1.5L fuel-injected SOHC I4 engine, which was a performance upgrade from the carbureted engine. With the engine change came the name change from S to Si, which stands for sport injection.

The 1986 Civic CRX Si could hit 60 mph in 9.1 seconds, which was 1.3 seconds faster than the regular 1986 CRX model.

The new fuel-injected engine had Formula 1 technologies that provided the extra boost in power that set the Si models apart from the others. The first proper Si models produced 91 horsepower and 93 lb-ft of torque, which was a lot back in the 80s, even more so with the Civic's lightweight nature. To achieve flatter cornering, Honda gave the Si model a special sport suspension system with nitrogen gas-filled rear shocks and front and rear stabilizer bars.

Soon after it made its grand entrance, the Si gained a large following and is now one of the highest sought after Civic trims.

Overview Of The Third Generation

LINEUP	YEARS AVAILABLE	WHEELBASE	ENGINE OPTIONS
Hatchback	1984-1987	93.7”	E Engine
Sedan	1984-1987	96.5”	E Engine
Wagovan	1984-1987	96.5”	E Engine
CRX Coupe	1984-1987	93.7”	SOHC (Si only)
ENGINE OPTIONS	**# OF CYLINDERS**	**HORSEPOWER**	**DISPLACEMENT**
E Engine	4	76	1187cc-1488cc
SOHC	4	91	1488cc-1590cc
TRANSMISSION OPTIONS			**YEARS AVAILABLE**
Three-speed automatic (Hondamatic)			1984-1985
Four-speed automatic (Hondamatic)			1986-1987
Four-speed manual			1984-1986
Five-speed manual 4WD			1987

The Fourth Generation: New And Improved In All Aspects

1988 brought a new engine family, design changes, and more features designed for convenience and comfort. Now in its fourth generation, the Civic had acquired increased dimensions, a lower hood line, and a softer shape. There were also subtle cosmetic changes like a new front bumper design and thinner side moldings.

The fourth generation offered the following models: STD, DX, LX, EX, and Si.

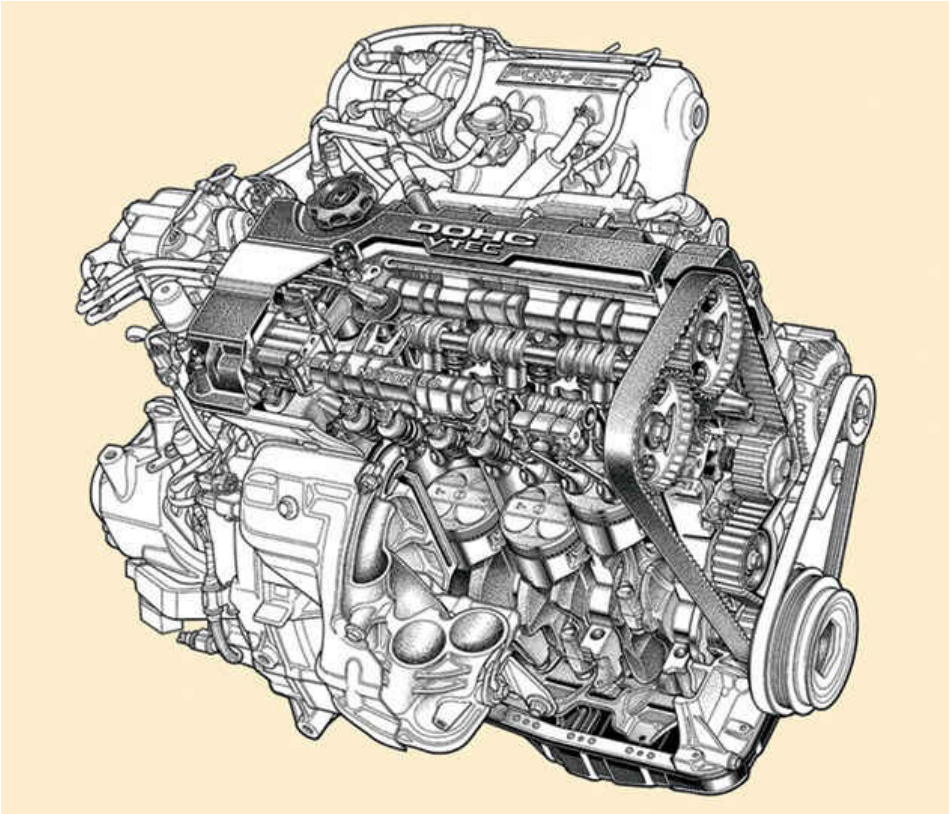
Like the first generation Civic models, the fourth generation models featured a unique suspension setup. However, this time Honda designed a fully independent rear suspension system with a control arm setup instead of using the four-wheel independent strut-type suspension system found in the first generation. All the U.S. models received an electronic fuel injection system.

The top trim available in this generation, which is the EX, came with attractive convenient features like power windows, locks, mirrors, and intermittent wipers. Even some of the lower trim levels, including the DX, came with cloth seats and optional features like power steering and wheel covers.

At the end of the fourth generation, the U.S. market said goodbye to the Honda Civic station wagon. It was still available overseas as the Honda Civic shuttle, but Honda decided to nix the boxy, high-roofed body style in the U.S. because SUVs, which skyrocketed in popularity in the 1990s, were beginning to overshadow sales of station wagons.

VTEC: A New Engine Family

In 1984, Honda decided to develop an effective engine with the latest technologies for the mainstream market, so they established the New Concept Engine program. Five years later, the program finally perfected the technology every driver needed: Variable Valve Timing and Lift Electronic Control (VTEC). It provided a whole new level of performance and fuel efficiency for compact engines.



The structure of the first VTEC engine.

Designed to crank out more horsepower when needed and to provide more fuel efficiency at lower speeds, the VTEC technology is composed of an engine computer unit (ECU) that commands valves in each cylinder to perform in accordance with the accelerator. The more you press down on the accelerator, the farther the cylinders open and the more air and fuel the engine takes in. The opposite happens when you let up on the accelerator. This technology was derived from F-1 racing.

With this new technology, which could reduce intake resistance and increase performance at high speeds, Honda was able to achieve 160 horsepower, which was an incredibly high speed for a subcompact car at the time. The Civic shared the cutting-edge technology with a few other Honda models, including the NSX and Accord.

The VTEC engine family marked one of the biggest changes in the fourth generation. It was incredibly well received by Civic drivers globally, which isn't a surprise. VTEC engines delivered better fuel economy, a smoother idle, and easier start-ups.

1989 was a good year for the VTEC. The Civic SiR, which housed the revolutionary engine, brought home the Golden Steering Wheel Award (from a German newspaper) and ranked the highest quality and the most reliable car in a survey conducted by France's "L'Automobile Magazine".

The VTEC engine didn't make its way to the U.S. until the beginning of the fifth generation.

Overview Of The Fourth Generation

LINEUP	YEARS AVAILABLE	WHEELBASE	ENGINE OPTIONS
Hatchback	1988-1991	98.4"	SOHC
Sedan	1988-1991	98.4"	SOHC
Station Wagon	1988-1991	98.4"	SOHC
ENGINE OPTIONS	**# OF CYLINDERS**	**HORSEPOWER**	**DISPLACEMENT**
SOHC	4	70-108	1300cc-1500cc
TRANSMISSION OPTIONS			**YEARS AVAILABLE**
Four-speed automatic (Hondamatic)			1988-1991
Four-speed manual			1988-1991
Five-speed manual			1988-1991
Six-speed manual			1988-1991

The Fifth Generation: A Car For Everybody

Even though Honda dropped the Wagovan in the USA for the fifth generation, the hatchback and sedan body styles offered more trim, engine, and transmission options than ever. Honda made a point to accommodate every type of driver with their wide range of options.

The Civic kicked off the fifth generation in 1992 with a few "Car of the Year Japan" awards already under its belt. All fifth generation Civic buyers got to enjoy the new futuristic aerodynamic design that included a once-again increased wheelbase, fewer gaps, and tighter seams. The smoother body lines and the strong body construction led to reduced drag and cabin noise, as well as a solid platform for an improved suspension system.

With the goal of marketing the Civic as a luxury sedan, Honda gave the interior posh upgrades, including rich carpeting, a thick steering wheel, gold-plated circuits, and a front airbag on the driver's side across the lineup.

There were also optional amenities usually reserved for higher trims, such as a passenger airbag, anti-lock brakes, and a higher-output stereo. Honda made the decision to offer modern safety features for all Civic models in order to promote safety. The higher trims, such as the EX coupe, LX sedan, and Si hatchback, received cruise control, larger wheels, and power locks, windows, and mirrors.

In 1993, Honda introduced a new body style: the Civic coupe, which was the first two-door coupe in Civic history. It was available in three different trim levels: DX, EX, and EX-S.

In a quest to make environmental friendliness one of their main focuses for the fifth generation, Honda loaded the Civic with a high amount of recyclable components and developed a greener variation of the VTEC engine called VTEC-E. The variation achieved an extraordinarily high fuel economy of about 48 city and 55 highway MPG, which was considered impossible in 1992, by using roller rocker arms to minimize lobe lift.

The base model started at approximately $8,000 (which is about $14,000 in today's dollars), making the Civic an immediate hit. Buyers got a lot of attractive features, including handling derived from Honda's F1 racers, for such a low price. In 1995 – the last year of the fifth generation – Honda hit a major milestone for the Civic: its worldwide production finally exceeded 10 million units.

The fifth generation Civic models were so safe, green, and well built that they're still sought out by tuners and racers today.

The Birth Of A New Movement

At the onset of the Civic's fifth generation, young American car enthusiasts began to notice the Civic's potential to achieve an impressive racing pedigree. They came to appreciate the Civic's racecar-quality suspension system, nimble handling, and affordability. In fact, they found that the Civic's EG chassis gave the Ford Mustang a run for its money.

While the Si and SiR trim levels are among the most sought after ones from the fifth generation, other trim levels such as the DX and VX stood on their own merit. The Civic's simple design allowed car enthusiasts to swap the factory VTEC-E engine or lower-end SOHC VTEC engine for a more powerful engine. A lot of them opted for JDM or Del Sol B16 retrofits. Some even put in one of those huge 2.2L H22 engines from the Preludes made in the same period.

Even though Honda was already at the forefront of import scene in America, the fifth generation Civic's versatile and affordable nature ignited the tuner movement in mainstream America. The entry-level car provided young car enthusiasts accessibility to the scene. From there, the tuner community became mainstream across the country.

Because so many people back in the 1990s modified their Civics EGs, a stock fifth-gen EG with all its original parts is rare to come by these days.

Overview Of The Fifth Generation

LINEUP	YEARS AVAILABLE	WHEELBASE	ENGINE OPTIONS
Hatchback	1992-1995	101.4”	SOHC VTEC / VTEC-E
Sedan	1992-1995	103.2”	SOHC VTEC
Coupe	1993-1995	103.2”	SOHC VTEC
ENGINE OPTIONS	**# OF CYLINDERS**	**HORSEPOWER**	**DISPLACEMENT**
SOHC VTEC	4	102-125	1493cc-1590cc
VTEC-E	4	70-92	1493cc
TRANSMISSION OPTIONS			**YEARS AVAILABLE**
Four-speed automatic (S24A)			1992-1995
Five-speed manual			1992-1995

The Sixth Generation: Redesigned For Efficiency And Comfort

A lot of good things happened in the mid 1990s. The movie Braveheart won five Academy Awards, the Macarena took the world by storm, and Honda released the new and improved Civic in September 1995 just in time for the sixth generation.

The entire sixth generation Civic lineup received cosmetic updates, including 14” stock wheels.

The Honda Civic underwent many cosmetic and performance changes in the 22 years between its creation in 1973 and the sixth generation's debut in 1995.

As if the fifth generation Civics didn't already provide superior performance, low enough emissions, and above-average safety ratings, Honda still upped the ante for the sixth generation. They loaded the redesigned Civic with new technologies including:

1. A new three-stage VTEC engine with high output and high fuel efficiency (starting at 106 horsepower and 39 mpg city/45 mpg highway)

2. A new CVT transmission system called Multimatic, which was designed to create a smoother ride by absorbing shock during gear shifts

Even though the wheelbase remained the same for the sedan and coupe body styles, the overall length increased by 2-4 inches for all body styles.

With efficiency and comfort as their focus, Honda added a few new trim levels throughout the generation.

- Civic GX: Introduced in 1998, this trim level ran on natural gas and was exclusively sold as a sedan to fleet customers.

- Civic HX: This trim came with the same features as the DX trim, but with a few extras, such as a CVT transmission, a slightly more powerful VTEC-E engine, alloy wheels, power steering, and more.

- Civic VP: Available as a sedan only, the Value Package (VP) trim came with attractive options like a CD player, air conditioning, keyless entry, power locks, and an automatic transmission at an inexpensive price. It made its debut in 1999.

In 1998, Honda upped the ante on comfort and convenience for the hatchback by adding a few updates, the main ones being the addition of interior map lights and an exterior handle. They also brought back the Si in 1999, making it available only as a coupe and a U.S.-specific badge.

Honda implemented so many radical changes halfway through this generation because they listened closely to consumers' feedback and, rather than sticking with the generation's key characteristics until the start of the next generation, they gave the consumers what they wanted almost immediately. This smart move won Honda brownie points with many fans.

Overview Of The Sixth Generation

LINEUP	YEARS AVAILABLE	WHEELBASE	ENGINE OPTIONS
Hatchback	1996-2000	103.2"	SOHC VTEC / VTEC-E
Sedan	1996-2000	103.2"	SOHC VTEC/VTEC-E
Coupe	1996-2000	103.2"	VTEC-E
ENGINE OPTIONS	**# OF CYLINDERS**	**HORSEPOWER**	**DISPLACEMENT**
SOHC VTEC	4	106-160	1590cc
VTEC-E	4	106-127	1590cc
TRANSMISSION OPTIONS			**YEARS AVAILABLE**
Four-speed automatic (S24A)			1996-2000
Five-speed manual			1997-1999
CVT (Multimatic)			1996-2000

The Seventh Generation: Now A Compact Car

Honda greeted the new millennium with exciting news: they had officially turned the Civic into a compact car. Funnily enough, Honda carried over the 103.2" wheelbase from the previous generation, but the new Civic's overall length increased by between one and four inches, depending on the body style.

While the Civic graduated to a compact car, its performance car status suffered a bit. Despite the fact that the seventh generation got performance upgrades, many performance-oriented fans still preferred the earlier generations. Still, the seventh generation Civic was rated the third best selling passenger car in the U.S.

Described as the “benchmark of compact cars,” the seventh gen Civic sported a fresh new look and a more spacious interior that enabled the model to graduate from a subcompact car to a compact car. Not only did Honda maximize the interior space, but they also implemented a flat, low floor design that made moving around in the car easier.

The Civic commenced its first year as a compact car with some nifty performance upgrades. Honda got rid of the control-arm front suspension system and replaced it with a strut setup in order to lower costs and to free up some room in the engine bay for the new Honda K-series engine.

Speaking of which, the K-series engine had 1.7 liters and produced 117 horsepower in some of the lower trims and 127 horsepower in the higher trims, like the EX. The Multimatic transmission made an appearance only in the GX and HX models.

In 2002, Honda slightly improved the Civic’s handling and ride quality with an upgraded suspension system and a revised steering box, respectively. They also did away with some cabin noise with increased sound insulation materials.

The Honda Civic Si came back in 2002, but only as an exclusive hatchback model.

With the advanced G-CON technology Honda had implemented only a few years earlier in 1998, the seventh generation Civic received high safety ratings.

The seventh generation went out with a bang in 2005 with the introduction of the Special Edition (SE) trim for the sedan and coupe. It featured a number of luxurious upgrades such as aluminum wheels, a leather steering wheel, a spoiler, and a stereo with a six-disc CD changer and MP3 capability.

Saving The Environment One Civic Hybrid At A Time

In spring 2002, Honda unveiled a hybrid version of the Civic as a 2003 model. The automaker marketed it as the most fuel-efficient five-passenger sedan to be sold in the US. Its 85 hp gasoline-electric hybrid engine got 46 mpg city and 51 mpg highway, which was a slight upgrade from the three-stage VTEC engine that debuted in the previous generation. The 2003 Civic Hybrid was the first vehicle to receive the Advanced Technology Partial Zero-Emissions Vehicle (AT-PZEV) certificate from the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

Honda added height-adjustable seats to the Civic Hybrid sedan in 2004, and continued to improve upon the model until they discontinued it in 2015. Honda cited poor sales as the reason behind their decision to pull the plug on the Civic Hybrid. Despite the discontinuation, Honda still paved the way in fuel efficiency and hybrid technology with the Honda Civic GX and the other hybrids in their corner of the market.

Overview Of The Seventh Generation

LINEUP	YEARS AVAILABLE	WHEELBASE	ENGINE OPTIONS
Hatchback (Si)	2002-2004	101.6”	DOHC
Sedan	2001-2005	103.2”	All
Coupe	2001-2005	103.2”	All (except hybrid)
ENGINE OPTIONS	**# OF CYLINDERS**	**HORSEPOWER**	**DISPLACEMENT**
IMA		85-93	
SOHC	4	115	1668cc
SOHC VTEC-E	4	117	1668cc
SOHC/DOHC VTEC	4	127	1668cc
DOHC	4	160	1998cc
TRANSMISSION OPTIONS			**YEARS AVAILABLE**
CVT (Multimatic)			2001-2003
Four-speed automatic (S24A)			2001-2003
Five-speed manual			2001-2005

The Eighth Generation: Paving The Way To The Civic We Know Today

Some great things can still be improved. Nothing illustrates that better than the eighth generation Civic. While the seventh generation blew other compact cars out of the water, the eighth generation still saw improvements in all departments.

Futuristic aerodynamic features led the way for the 2006 Civic model. When compared to the 2005 model, the 2006 model showed noticeable differences. The body now sported a smooth aerodynamic design that is still prominent in Civics today. Honda shortened the hood, expanded the windshield, increased the backseat window space, and added rear flanks.

Honda didn't just transform the Civic's styling. They also made positive changes to the car's performance, fuel economy, and safety. All the models in this generation got stability control, a full array of airbags, and a new DOHC i-VTEC engine that performed like a large engine while offering the fuel efficiency of a smaller engine.

While Honda got rid of the hatchback for the eighth generation, a few models made a comeback:

- Si (as a coupe)
- Hybrid
- Natural gas GX (now available to the public)

The Generation Of The Si

If Si fans thought the last generation drove the last nail into the coffin of the Civic's reputation as a reliable performance car, they were sorely mistaken. The automaker was clearly well aware that they had somewhat neglected the performance side of the Civic in the process of transiting the Civic into a compact car, amping up the car's luxury factor, and introducing a hybrid model in the last generation. They made up for it in the eighth generation by spoiling the Si with attractive upgrades and making it extra fun to drive.

The sport compact trim got a new engine: a variation of the i-VTEC called K20Z3, which was the most powerful U.S.-based Civic engine at the time. Other upgrades to the Si included:

- Six-speed manual transmission
- Sport seats
- Leather upholstery
- Limited-slip differential
- A sedan body style introduced to the U.S. market
- New exterior colors after 2009 (Redline Orange Pearl, Dyno Blue, Polished Metal Metallic, and Crystal Black Pearl)

In 2008, Honda released only 1,000 units of the Mugen Si sedan, which was a beefed-up version of the already high-performing trim level. The Mugen, which stands for “without limits,” model had an MSRP of $29,500, making it quite a steal considering all the premium performance upgrades it carried:

- High-flowing cat-back exhaust system
- Sport suspension system
- Sport muffler
- Shift knob designed exclusively for the trim
- Exclusive grille
- Mugen forged GP wheels
- Custom body kit

The eighth generation cemented the Si’s popularity and helped propel it to the top of the list for affordable, powerful, and fun cars. The new and improved Si impressed so many that it won the 2006 Motor Trend Car of the Year award.

Overview Of The Eighth Generation

LINEUP	YEARS AVAILABLE	WHEELBASE	ENGINE OPTIONS
Coupe	2006-2011	104.3”	DOHC i-VTEC
Sedan	2006-2011	106.3”	DOHC i-VTEC
ENGINE OPTIONS	**# OF CYLINDERS**	**HORSEPOWER**	**DISPLACEMENT**
DOHC i-VTEC	4	140-197	1799cc
TRANSMISSION OPTIONS			**YEARS AVAILABLE**
Five-speed automatic			2006-2011
Five-speed manual			2006-2011
Six-speed manual			2006-2011
CVT (Multimatic)			2006

The Ninth Generation: A Sensible Response To The 2008 Recession

The ninth generation was supposed to begin earlier, but it was delayed to 2012 because Honda needed to work out the kinks regarding fuel economy and emissions regulations in the U.S.

Honda also had to scrap their plans to reform the Civic into a mid-size sedan because when the recession hit in 2008, consumers sought out economical cars and the Civic fit the bill. The automaker responded to market demand by increasing the interior space while decreasing the size and weight of the car. They traded in the body’s usual sheet metal for a newer, lighter sheet metal and boosted the fuel economy to 44 mpg (in combined city and highway) at the most, both of which were major selling points for buyers on a budget.

Even though the ninth generation Civic’s design served as a practical solution to many consumers’ financial woes, Honda still put forth the effort to implement a futuristic and distinctive style.

Dubbed a “one-motion design” by Honda, the body’s design now sported a longer hood and sleeker lines. Despite the 2012 model’s low MSRP price, Honda still managed to load it up with their latest cutting-edge technology, but not without sacrificing the quality of the car’s interior materials and driving dynamics.

The automaker redesigned the two-tier instrument panel and gave all the models (except the base model DX) an informational display on the right side of the panel, next to the speedometer. Beneath it was a five-inch LCD screen that displayed driving directions, song titles, artist information, and more.

Despite all those exciting changes, many consumers viewed the 2012 Civic as lackluster in the comfort and handling departments. Honda immediately responded by giving the Civic a facelift just in time for the 2013 model’s release. The facelift brought many changes, the most notable ones being:

- A backup camera
- Bluetooth controls
- Enhanced ride quality and handling
- Improved interior material quality

Honda brought even more interior refinements and other upgrades to the 2014 model, including:

- LaneWatch blind spot monitor
- Smart Entry with push button start
- All-new CVT transmission for gasoline-powered models
- Restyled exterior parts (e.g., grille, hood, headlights, etc.)

The ninth generation Civic lineup in the U.S. had only the coupe and sedan body styles. Europe received the hatchback and estate model, as well.

Overview Of The Ninth Generation

LINEUP	YEARS AVAILABLE	WHEELBASE	ENGINE OPTIONS
Sedan	2012-2015	105.1”	R18A1/K24Z7
Coupe	2012-2015	103.2”	R18A1/K24Z7
ENGINE OPTIONS	**# OF CYLINDERS**	**HORSEPOWER**	**DISPLACEMENT**
R18A1	4	140	1799cc
K24Z7	4	201	2354cc
SOHC i-VTEC IMA	4	90	
TRANSMISSION OPTIONS			**YEARS AVAILABLE**
Five-speed automatic			2012-2015
Five-speed manual			2012-2015
Six-speed manual			2012-2015

The Tenth Generation: Bigger And Better

Honda started off the tenth generation in 2016 with a bang. They finally did what they weren’t able to do four years earlier: they bumped the Civic to a mid-size car. It’s no surprise because at this point, the Civic had undoubtedly matured past the economical stage. Even though its MSRP remained affordable, the 2016 Civic carried many attractive features also found in Honda’s more expensive models.

Even though Honda upgraded to higher grade steel for the tenth generation, the 2016 model was still 68 pounds lighter than the previous year’s model. To compensate for the lighter weight and to increase handling, Honda lengthened the wheelbase, beefed up the steering column, and lowered the center of gravity by .6 inches.

Honda also made rear disc brakes standard across all Civic models. The Civic proved to be among the safest in its class with Honda’s cutting-edge SENSING technologies installed in the car. Last, but not least, a new engine was rolled out: a turbocharged direct injected I4 engine mated with a CVT transmission.

Arguably the most striking feature of the tenth generation Civic is the aggressive new body styling. Among the LED headlights and taillights are more curved lines (notably in the hood and windshield), new fog lights, and a redesigned front end with a new grille. Essentially, Honda did away with the bare boned economical look the Civic was well known for and rightfully graced it with its own distinctive style to kick off its new status as a mid-size car.

The Type R: Finally Available In The U.S.

The exciting news that Honda resurrected the hatchback after a 12-year hiatus was overshadowed by the fact that the Type R was finally making its way to the U.S.

Created in 1997 in Japan, the Type R was the highest performance trim of the Civic. It sported an aggressive look, packed a lot of power, and made appearances on racetracks all over Japan and Europe.

After 20 long years of watching the rest of the world burn the pavement with the forbidden fruit, Civic fans in the U.S. were beyond overjoyed when the highly coveted model finally hit the U.S. market on June 14, 2017.

The Type R hit the U.S. soil running as the fastest, most powerful Honda sold in America. The 2017 model pushed 306 horsepower with its 2.0-liter turbocharged engine and came with an MSRP of $33,900.

Buyers could choose between five different exterior colors: Championship White, Crystal Black Pearl, Rallye Red, Aegean Blue Metallic, and Polished Metal Metallic.

Loaded with performance upgrades like a Dual-Axis front suspension system and adaptive steering, the Type R has already become a hot commodity in the U.S. In fact, the very first U.S.-spec Type R was sold for $200,000 at a charity auction only one day after the red badge became available in America.

Overview Of The Tenth Generation

LINEUP	YEARS AVAILABLE	WHEELBASE	ENGINE OPTIONS
Coupe	2016-present	106.3”	VTEC TURBO/DOHC
Sedan	2016-present	106.3”	VTEC TURBO/DOHC
Hatchback	2017-present	106.3”	VTEC TURBO/DOHC
ENGINE OPTIONS	**# OF CYLINDERS**	**HORSEPOWER**	**DISPLACEMENT**
VTEC TURBO	4	205	1498cc
DOHC	4	158	1996cc
TRANSMISSION OPTIONS			**YEARS AVAILABLE**
Seven-speed automatic (CVT)			2016-present
Six-speed manual			2016-present

The Honda Civic Is Not Going Anywhere Anytime Soon

The Honda Civic has come a long way since its debut in 1972. In 2017, Honda sold at least 377,000 units of the Civic in the U.S. alone. That's almost eighteen times the amount of units they sold in 1972.

As Honda's longest running nameplate, the Civic is bound to receive a huge 50th birthday celebration in 2022. Many Honda fans are anxiously anticipating the festivities because, considering the rate it's going these days, the Civic will be the first Honda vehicle to become half a century old.

Not only is the Honda Civic an incredibly important part of Honda's history, but it has also helped shape the American automobile culture with its affordability, exceptionally good fuel economy, and high-quality performance. There is no doubt it will stick around for a long time.

Recommended Resources for Civic Owners

- Honda.com: Announcing the Civic
- Honda.com: Introducing the CVCC
- Honda.com: History of the Civic
- Honda.com: The VTEC Engine
- Edmunds.com: Civic Generations
- Car and Driver's Civic Pride: A Visual History of the Honda Civic
- MotorTrend.com: Anticipating the 10th-Gen 2017 Honda Civic Si
- Focus On: 100 Most Popular Sedans
- AutoTrader.ca: Evolution of the Honda Civic