







# Dodge

Dodge



**DODGE**

<b>Type</b>	Subsidiary of Chrysler Group LLC
<b>Headquarters</b>	Auburn Hills, Michigan, United States
<b>Area served</b>	Global - United States, Mexico, Europe, South America, Asia, and Australia
<b>Products</b>	Cars, SUVs, vans, pickup trucks
<b>Website</b>	dodge.com (U.S.) discoverdodge.com (Global)

**Dodge** is a United States-based brand of automobiles, minivans, sport utility vehicles, and pickup trucks, manufactured and marketed by Chrysler Group LLC in more than 60 different countries and territories worldwide. Founded as the Dodge Brothers Company in 1900 to supply parts and assemblies for Detroit's growing auto industry, Dodge began making its own complete vehicles in 1914. The brand was sold to Chrysler Corporation in 1928, passed through the short-lived DaimlerChrysler merger of 1998–2007 as part of the Chrysler Group, was a part of **Chrysler LLC** owned by Cerberus Capital Management, a private equity investment firm, and now a part of the **Chrysler Group LLC** which has an alliance with Fiat.

## Founding and early years

After the founding of the Dodge Brothers Company by Horace and John Dodge in 1900, the Detroit-based company quickly found work producing precision engine and chassis components for the city's burgeoning number of automobile firms. Chief among these customers were the established Olds Motor Vehicle Company and the then-new Ford Motor Company. Dodge Brothers enjoyed much success in this field, but the brothers' growing wish to build complete vehicles was exemplified by John Dodge's 1913 exclamation that he was "tired of being carried around in Henry Ford's vest pocket."

By 1914, he and Horace had fixed that by creating the new four-cylinder Dodge Model 30. Pitched as a slightly more upscale competitor to the ubiquitous Ford Model T, it pioneered or made standard many features later taken for granted: all-steel body construction (when the vast majority of cars worldwide still used wood framing under steel panels, though Stoneleigh and BSA had used steel bodies as early as 1911), 12-volt electrical system (6-volt systems would remain the norm up until the 1950s), and sliding-gear transmission (the best-selling Model T would retain an antiquated planetary design all the way until its demise in 1927). As a result of all this, as well as the brothers' well-earned reputation for quality through the parts they had made for other successful vehicles, Dodge cars were ranked at second place for U.S. sales as early as 1916. The same year, Henry Ford decided to stop paying dividends, leading to the Dodge brothers filing suit to protect approximately a million dollars a year they were earning; this led Ford to buy out his shareholders, and the Dodges were paid some US\$25 million.

In the same year, Dodge vehicles won wide acclaim for durability while in service with the US Army's Pancho Villa Expedition into Mexico.<sup>[4]</sup> One notable instance was in May when the 6th Infantry received a reported sighting of Julio Cardenas, one of Villa's most trusted subordinates. Lt. George S. Patton led ten soldiers and two civilian guides in three Dodge Model 30 touring cars to conduct a raid at a ranch house in San Miguelito, Sonora. During the ensuing firefight the party killed three men, of whom one was identified as Cardenas. Patton's men tied the bodies to the hoods of the Dodges, returning to headquarters in Dublán and an excited reception from US newspapermen.

## Death of the brothers

Dodge cars continued to rank second place in American sales in 1920. But that year, tragedy struck as John Dodge was felled by pneumonia in January. His brother Horace then died of cirrhosis in December of the same year (reportedly out of grief at the loss of his brother, with whom he was very close). The Dodge Brothers Company fell into the hands of the brothers' widows, who promoted long-time employee Frederick Haynes to the company presidency. During this time, the Model 30 was evolved to become the new Series 116 (though it retained the same basic construction and engineering features).

Dodge Brothers emerged as a leading builder of light trucks. They also entered into a production agreement whereby they produced trucks marketed as Graham Brothers by the men who would later produce Graham and Graham-Paige automobiles.



Stagnation in development was becoming apparent, however, and the public responded by dropping Dodge to fifth place in the industry by 1925. That year, the Dodge Brothers Company was sold by the widows to the well-known investment group Dillon, Read & Co. for no less than US\$146 million (at the time, the largest cash transaction in history).

Dillon, Read quickly installed one of their own men at the company, one E.G. Wilmer, who set about trying to keep the firm on an even keel. Changes to the car, save for superficial things like trim levels and colors, remained minimal until 1927, when the new senior six-cylinder line was introduced. The former four-cylinder line was kept on, but renamed the Fast Four line until it was dropped in favor of two lighter six-cylinder models (the Standard Six and Victory Six) for 1928.

Despite all this, Dodge's sales had already dropped to seventh place in the industry by 1927, and Dillon, Read began looking for someone to take over the company on a more permanent basis.

### **Purchase from Dillon, Read**

Enter Walter P. Chrysler, head of the recently-founded (in 1924) Chrysler Corporation and former president of General Motors' successful Buick division. Chrysler had wanted to purchase Dodge two years earlier, and had in the meantime created his own DeSoto brand of cars to challenge Dodge's new entries in the medium-priced field.

When Chrysler called again in 1928, Dillon, Read was finally ready to talk. In a foreshadowing of much later acquisitions by his company, Chrysler wanted Dodge more for its name, its extensive dealer network and its factory than anything it was producing at the time. The big sale came about in July 1928, when Chrysler and Dodge engaged in an exchange of stock worth US\$170 million. Production of existing models continued, with minor changes here and there, through the end of 1928 and (in the case of the Senior) into 1929.

### **Pre-war years**

To fit better in Chrysler Corporation lineup, alongside low-priced Plymouth and medium-priced DeSoto, Dodge's lineup for early 1930 was trimmed down to a core group of two lines and thirteen models (from three lines and nineteen models just over a year previous). Prices started out just above DeSoto but were somewhat less than top-of-the-line Chrysler, in a small-scale recreation of General Motors' "step-up" marketing concept. (DeSoto would eventually flip sides, moving a notch above Dodge during the early 1930s.)

For late 1930, Dodge took another step up by adding a new eight-cylinder line to complement the existing Senior six-cylinder. This basic format of a dual line with Six and Eight models continued through 1934, and the cars were gradually streamlined and lengthened in step with prevailing trends of the day. A long-wheelbase edition of the remaining Six was added for 1934 and would remain a part of the lineup for many years.

The Dodge line, along with most of the Corporation's output, was restyled in the so-called "Wind Stream" look for 1935. This was a mild form of streamlining, which saw sales jump remarkably over the previous year (even though Dodge as a whole still dropped to fifth place for the year after two years of holding down fourth).

Another major restyle arrived for the 25th anniversary 1939 models, the top model of which Dodge dubbed the Luxury Liner series. These were once again completely redesigned for 1942. However, just after these models were introduced, Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor forced the shutdown of Dodge's passenger car assembly lines in favor of war production.

## **World War II**

Chrysler was prolific in its production of war material from 1942 to 1945, and Dodge in particular was well-known to both average citizens and thankful soldiers for their tough military-spec truck models. Starting with the hastily converted VC series and evolving into the celebrated WC series, Dodge built a strong reputation for itself that readily carried over into civilian models after the war.

## **Post-war years**

Civilian production at Dodge was restarted by late 1945, in time for the 1946 model year. The "seller's market" of the early postwar years, brought on by the lack of any new cars throughout the war, meant that every automaker found it easy to sell vehicles regardless of any drawbacks they might have. Like almost every other automaker, Dodge sold lightly facelifted revisions of its 1942 design through the 1948 season. As before, these were a single series of six-cylinder models with two trim levels (basic Deluxe or plusher Custom).

Styling was not initially Dodge's strong point during this period, though that began to change by 1953 under the direction of corporate design chief Virgil Exner. At the same time, Dodge also introduced its first V8 engine—the original design of the famed Hemi. With steadily upgraded styling and ever-stronger engines every year through 1960, Dodge found a ready market for its products as America discovered the joys of freeway travel. This situation improved when Chrysler phased the failing DeSoto brand out of its lineup after 1961, leaving Dodge as the company's only line in the middle of the market.

Dodge entered the compact car field for 1961 with their new Lancer sedan (a variation on Plymouth's Valiant). Though it was not initially successful, the Dart range that came after it in 1963 would prove to be one of the division's top sellers for many years.

Chrysler did make an ill-advised move to downsize the Dodge and Plymouth full-size lines for 1962, which resulted in a loss of sales. However, they turned this around in 1965 by turning those former full-sizes into "new" mid-size models; Dodge revived the Coronet nameplate in this way and later added a sporty fastback version called the Charger that became both a sales leader and a winner on the NASCAR circuit.

Full-size models evolved gradually during this time. After being restored to their former dimensions for 1965, the Polara and Monaco were changed mostly in appearance for the next ten years or so. Unique "fuselage" styling was employed for 1969, then was toned down again for 1974.

Dodge is well-known today for being a player in the muscle car market of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Along with the Charger, models like the Coronet R/T and Super Bee were popular with buyers seeking performance. The pinnacle of this effort was the introduction of the Challenger sports coupe and convertible (Dodge's entry into the "pony car" class ) in 1970, which offered everything from mild economy engines up to the wild race-ready Hemi V8 in the same package.

In an effort to reach every segment of the market, Dodge even reached a hand across the Pacific to its partner Mitsubishi Motors and marketed their subcompact as the Colt to compete with the AMC Gremlin, Chevrolet Vega, and Ford Pinto. Chrysler would over the years come to rely heavily on their relationship with Mitsubishi.

## **Times of crisis**

Everything changed at Dodge (and Chrysler as a whole) when the 1973 oil crisis hit the United States. Save for the Colt and certain model of the Dart, Dodge's lineup was quickly seen as extremely inefficient. In fairness, this was true of most American automakers at the time, but Chrysler was also not in the best financial shape to do anything about it. Consequently, while General Motors and Ford were quick to begin downsizing their largest cars, Chrysler (and Dodge) moved more slowly out of necessity.

At the very least, Chrysler was able to use some of its other resources. Borrowing the recently-introduced Chrysler Horizon from their European division, Dodge was able to get its new Omni subcompact on the market fairly quickly. At the same time, they increased the number of models imported from Mitsubishi: first came a smaller Colt (based on Mitsubishi's Mitsubishi Lancer line, then a revival of the Challenger (though with nothing more than a four-cylinder under the hood, rather than the booming V8s of yore).

Bigger Dodges, though, remained rooted in old habits. The Dart was replaced by a new Aspen for 1976, and Coronet and Charger were effectively replaced by the Diplomat for 1977, which was actually a fancier Aspen. Meanwhile, the huge Monaco (Royal Monaco beginning in 1977 when the mid-sized Coronet was renamed "Monaco") models hung around through 1977, losing sales every year, until finally being replaced by the St. Regis for 1979 following a one-year absence from the big car market. In a reversal of what happened for 1965, the St. Regis was an upsized Coronet. Buyers, understandably, were confused and chose to shop the competition rather than figure out what was going on at Dodge.

Everything came to a head in 1979 when Chrysler's new chairman, Lee Iacocca, requested and received federal loan guarantees from the United States Congress in an effort to save the company from having to file bankruptcy. With bailout money in hand, Chrysler quickly set to work on new models that would leave the past behind.

## **K-Cars and minivans**

The first fruit of Chrysler's crash development program was the "K-Car," the Dodge version of which was the Dodge Aries. This basic and durable front-wheel drive platform spawned a whole range of new models at Dodge during the 1980s, including the groundbreaking Dodge Caravan. The Caravan not only helped save Chrysler as a serious high-volume American automaker, but also spawned an entirely new market segment that remains popular today: the minivan.

Through the late 1980s and 1990s, Dodge's designation as the sporty-car division was backed by a succession of high-performance and/or aggressively-styled models including the Daytona, mid-sized 600 and several versions of the Lancer. The Dodge Spirit sedan was well received in numerous markets worldwide. The Omni remained in the line through 1990. Dodge-branded Mitsubishi vehicles were phased out by 1993, though Mitsubishi-made engines and electrical components were still widely used in American domestic Chrysler products. In 1992, Dodge moved their performance orientation forward substantially with the Viper, which featured an aluminum V10 engine and composite sports roadster body. This was the first step in what was marketed as "The New Dodge." Step two was the new Intrepid sedan, totally different from its boxy Dynasty predecessor.

The Intrepid used what Chrysler called "cab forward" styling, with the wheels pushed out to the corners of the chassis for maximum passenger space. They followed up on this idea in a smaller scale with the Stratus and Neon, both introduced for 1995. The Neon in particular was a hit, buoyed by a clever marketing campaign and good performance.



## The modern era

### DaimlerChrysler

Chrysler Corporation was sold to Daimler-Benz AG in 1998 to form DaimlerChrysler. Rationalizing Chrysler's broad lineup was a priority, and Dodge's sister brand Plymouth was withdrawn from the market. With this move, Dodge became DaimlerChrysler's low-price division as well as its performance division.

The Intrepid, Stratus, and Neon updates of the 1998 to 2000 timeframe were largely complete before Daimler's presence, and Dodge's first experience of any synergy with the German side of the company was the 2005 Magnum station wagon, introduced as a replacement for the Intrepid. Featuring Chrysler's first mainstream rear-wheel drive platform since the 1980s and a revival of the Hemi V8 engine, it was a modest success. The Charger was launched in 2006 on the same platform.

Further synergies were explored in the form of an extensive platform-sharing arrangement with Mitsubishi, which spawned the Caliber subcompact as a replacement for the Neon and the Avenger sedan. The rear-drive chassis was then used in early 2008 to build a new Challenger, with styling reminiscent of the original 1970 Challenger.

In Spring 2007, DaimlerChrysler reached an agreement with Cerberus Capital Management to sell off its Chrysler Group subsidiary, of which the Dodge division was a part. On June 10, 2009 Italian auto maker Fiat formed a partnership with Chrysler in which a "New Chrysler" was formed and was given the name Chrysler Group LLC in which Dodge remains a part of.

In response to very high motor fuel prices in Spring 2008, Dodge initiated a purchase incentive guaranteeing the buyer of a new Dodge would have to pay no more than \$2.99 per gallon of gasoline for three years. Shortly after the promotion began, the average price of gasoline dropped well below \$2.99 per gallon.



## Dodge Trucks

Over the years, Dodge has become at least as well-known for its many truck models as for its prodigious passenger car output.

### Pickups and medium to heavy trucks

Ever since the beginning of its history in 1914, Dodge has offered light truck models to interested buyers. For the first few years, these were based largely on the existing passenger cars, but eventually gained their own chassis and body designs as the market matured. Light- and medium-duty models were offered first, then a heavy-duty range was added during the 1930s and 1940s.

Following World War II and the successful application of four-wheel drive to the truck line, Dodge introduced a civilian version that it called the Power Wagon. At first based almost exactly on the military-type design, variants of the standard truck line were eventually given 4WD and the same "Power Wagon" name.

Dodge was among the first to introduce car-like features to its trucks, adding the plush Adventurer package during the 1960s and offering sedan-like space in its Club Cab bodies of the 1970s. Declining sales and increased competition during the 1970s eventually forced the company to drop its medium- and heavy-duty models, an arena the company has only recently begun to reenter.

Dodge introduced what they called the "Adult Toys" line to boost its truck sales in the late 1970s, starting off with the limited edition Lil' Red Express pickup (featuring visible big rig-style exhaust stacks). Later came the more widely available Warlock. Other "Adult Toys" from Dodge included the Macho Power Wagon and Street Van.

As part of a general decline in the commercial vehicle field during the 1970s, Dodge eliminated their LCF Series heavy-duty trucks in 1975, along with the Bighorn and medium-duty D-Series trucks, and affiliated S Series school buses were dropped in 1978. On the other hand, Dodge produced several thousand pickups for the United States Military under the CUCV program from the late 1970s into the early 1980s.

Continuing financial problems meant that even Dodge's light-duty models – renamed as the Ram Pickup line for 1981 – were carried over with the most minimal of updates until 1993. But two things helped to revitalize Dodge's fortunes during this time. First was their introduction of Cummins' powerful and reliable B Series turbo-diesel engine as an option for 1989. This innovation raised Dodge's profile among serious truck buyers who needed big power for towing or large loads. A compact Dakota pickup, which later offered a class-exclusive V8 engine, was also an attractive draw.



Dodge introduced the Ram's all-new “big-rig” styling treatment for 1994. Besides its instantly polarizing looks, exposure was also gained by usage of the new truck on the hit TV show *Walker, Texas Ranger* starring Chuck Norris. The new Ram also featured a totally new interior with a console box big enough to hold a laptop computer, or ventilation and radio controls that were designed to be easily used even with gloves on. A V10 engine derived from that used in the Viper sports car was also new, and the previously offered Cummins turbo-diesel remained available. The smaller Dakota was redesigned in the same vein for 1997, thus giving Dodge trucks a definitive “face” that set them apart from the competition.

The Ram was redesigned again for 2002 (and the Dakota followed in 2005), basically as an evolution of the original but now featuring the revival of Chrysler’s legendary Hemi V8 engine. New medium-duty chassis-cab models were introduced for 2007 (with standard Cummins turbo-diesel power), as a way of gradually getting Dodge back in the business truck market again.

For a time during the 1980s, Dodge also imported a line of small pickups from Mitsubishi. Known as the D50 or (later) the Ram 50, they were carried on as a stopgap until the Dakota’s sales eventually made the imported trucks irrelevant. (Ironically, Mitsubishi has more recently purchased Dakota pickups from Dodge and restyled them into their own Raider line for sale in North America.)



## Vans

Dodge had offered panel delivery models for many years since its founding, but their first purpose-built van model arrived for 1964 with the compact A Series. Based on the Dodge Dart platform and using its proven six-cylinder or V8 engines, the A-series was a strong competitor for both its domestic rivals (from Ford and Chevrolet/GMC) and the diminutive Volkswagen Transporter line.

As the market evolved, however, Dodge realized that a bigger and stronger van line would be needed in the future. Thus the B Series, introduced for 1971, offered both car-like comfort in its Sportsman passenger line or expansive room for gear and materials in its Tradesman cargo line. A chassis-cab version was also offered, for use with bigger cargo boxes or flatbeds.

Like the trucks, though, Chrysler's dire financial straits of the late 1970s precluded any major updates for the vans for many years. Rebadged as the Ram Van and Ram Wagon for 1981, this venerable design carried on with little more than cosmetic updates all the way to 2003.

The DaimlerChrysler merger of 1999 made it possible for Dodge to explore new ideas; hence the European-styled Mercedes-Benz Sprinter line of vans was brought over and given a Dodge styling treatment. Redesigned for 2006 as a 2007 model, the economical diesel-powered Sprinters have become very popular for city usage among delivery companies like FedEx and UPS in recent years.

Dodge also offered a cargo version of its best-selling Caravan for many years, at first calling it the Mini Ram Van (a name originally applied to short-wheelbase B-Series Ram Vans) and later dubbing it the Caravan C/V (for "Cargo Van").

## Sport utility vehicles

Dodge's first experiments with anything like a sport utility vehicle were seen in the late 1950s with a windowed version of their standard panel truck known as the Town Wagon. These were built in the same style through the mid-1960s.

But the division didn't enter the SUV arena in earnest until 1974, with the purpose-built Ramcharger. Offering the then-popular open body style and Dodge's powerful V8 engines, the Ramcharger was a strong competitor for trucks like the Ford Bronco, Chevrolet Blazer and International Harvester Scout II.

Once again, though, Dodge was left with outdated products during the 1980s as the market evolved. The Ramcharger hung on through 1993 with only minor updates, but was not replaced along with the rest of the truck line for



1994.

Instead, Dodge tried something new in 1998. Using the mid-sized Dakota pickup's chassis as a base, they built the four-door Durango SUV with seating for seven people and created a new niche. Sized between smaller SUVs (like the Chevrolet Blazer and Ford Explorer) and larger models (like the Chevrolet Tahoe and Ford Expedition), Durango was both a bit more and bit less of everything. The redesigned version for 2004 grew a little bit in every dimension, becoming a full-size SUV (and was thus somewhat less efficient), but was still sized between most of its competitors on either side of the aisle.

Dodge also imported a version of Mitsubishi's popular Montero (Pajero in Japan) as the Raider from 1987 to 1989.

## **International markets**

Dodge vehicles are now available in many countries throughout the world.

### **Asia**

Dodge entered the Japanese market in mid-2007, and re-entered the Chinese market in late 2007. Soueast Motors of China assembles the Caravan for the Chinese market. Dodge had already been marketing its vehicles in South Korea since 2004, starting with the Dakota.

Dodge vehicles have been sold in the Middle East for a considerably longer period of time.

### **Australia**

Dodge recently re-entered the Australian market in 2006 after a 30-year absence. Dodge Australia plans to release a new model every six months for the next three years, amid plans to re-ignite the brand's interest Down Under. The first of such models is the Dodge Caliber, which was well received at the recent 2006 Melbourne International Motor Show. The second model to be introduced was the Nitro, and the Avenger has also recently joined the lineup.

### **Brazil**

In Brazil, Dodge cars have been successful with the models Dakota and Ram, recently the only available model was the Ram 2500, but the model portfolio is being expanded, starting with the Journey crossover for the 2009 model year.

### **Canada**

In Canada, the Dodge lineup of cars was merged with the Chrysler lineup so that Canadians, instead of receiving the Dodge Intrepid, Dodge Dynasty or second gen Dodge Neon, received the Chrysler Intrepid, Chrysler Dynasty and Chrysler Neon. As of 2003, this decision has changed and cars known as Dodges in the US are once again badged as Dodges in Canada

## Europe

Following Chrysler's takeover of the British Rootes Group, Simca of France, and Barreiros of Spain, and the resultant establishment of Chrysler Europe in the late 1960s, the Dodge brand was used on light commercial vehicles, most of which were previously branded Commer or Karrier, on pickup and van versions of the Simca 1100, on the Spanish Dodge Dart, and on heavy trucks built in Spain. The most common of these was the Dodge 50 series, widely used by utility companies and the military, but rarely seen outside the UK, and the Spanish-built heavy-duty 300 series available as 4x2, 6x4, 8x2, and 8x4 rigs, as well as 4x2 semi-trailer tractors. All of these were also sold in selected export markets badged either as Fargo or De Soto.

Following Chrysler Europe's collapse in 1977, and the sale of their assets to Peugeot, the Chrysler/Dodge British and Spanish factories were quickly passed on to Renault Véhicules Industriels, who gradually re-branded the range of vans and trucks as Renaults through the 1980s. They would eventually drop these products altogether and used the plants to produce engines (in the UK) and "real" Renault truck models in Spain. Dodge vehicles would not return to the UK until the introduction of the Dodge Neon SRT-4, branded as a Chrysler Neon, in the mid 2000s.

The Dodge marque was reintroduced to Europe on a broad scale in 2006. Currently, the Dodge lineup in Europe consists of the Caliber, Avenger, Viper SRT-10, Nitro and Dodge Journey (2008).

## Mexico

In Mexico, the Hyundai Accent, Hyundai Atos, and Hyundai H100 are branded as "Dodge" or "[local market name] by Dodge" and sold at Chrysler/Dodge dealers. A rebadged Chinese-assembled Chery A1 will be sold in Mexico as a Dodge vehicle starting in 2008.

## Logos

**Star** The original Dodge logo was round, with two interlocking triangles forming a six-pointed star in the middle; an interlocked "DB" was at the center of the star, and the words "Dodge Brothers Motor Vehicles" encircled the outside edge.



**Forward Look** Virgil Exner's radical "Forward Look" redesign of Chrysler Corporation's vehicles for the 1955 model year was emphasized by the adoption of a logo by the same name, applied to all Chrysler Corporation vehicles. The Forward Look logo consisted of two overlapped boomerang shapes, suggesting space age rocket-propelled motion. This logo was incorporated into Dodge advertising, decorative trim, ignition and door key heads, and accessories through September 1962.



**Fratzog** Dodge's logo from September 1962 through 1976 was a fractured deltoid composed of three arrowhead shapes forming a 3-pointed star. One of its designers came up with the meaningless name **Fratzog** for the logo, which ultimately stuck. As the Dodge Division's logo, Fratzog was incorporated in various badges and emblems on Dodge vehicles. It was also integrated into the design of such parts as steering wheel center hubs and road wheel covers.



**Pentastar** From 1976 to 1992 Dodge used Chrysler's Pentastar logo. In advertisements and on dealer signage, Dodge's Pentastar was red, while Chrysler-Plymouth's was blue.



**Ram's head** Dodge introduced its current Ram's-head logo in 1993, standardizing on that logo in 1996 for all vehicles except the Viper. Trucks had carried a ram hood ornament as early as the 1930s, but its use was sporadic after that until the 1980s.























**DODGE**