

Scroungers Guide: Early Ford Spindles

If you're building an early Ford hot rod with a traditional buggy-spring setup in front, you'll need a pair of spindles for your I-beam or tube axle. There are various types that work better than others, as you'll see. Surprisingly for 70-to-80-year-old parts, there are still plenty floating around old-car swap meets or collecting dust in enthusiasts' garages. And if you're not up for searching, there are places like Bill McGrath's Early Ford Store (EarlyFordStore.com) in San Dimas, California, that carry all years, or you can buy new reproductions from places like Super Bell Axle Company (PeteAndJakes.com).

In general, kingpin diameters are the same from '28-'48, but there are differences in kingpin lengths, locator slots, and the configuration of the tops.

Remember, some of these front ends ran mechanical brakes ('38-earlier) and configured the brake rod assembly on the kingpin itself. All early Ford axles fit all '28-'48 spindles, you just need to use the kingpin kit that is correct for the year of the spindle you plan to use. There were no differences between passenger car and light-truck spindles except in '48. The '28-'34 spindles have steering balls on their arms for spring-loaded tie-rod ends. On '32-'34 spindles, the balls can be removed to use conventional tapered tie rod ends. The '35-'48 units are already designed to use conventional tapered tie rod ends. Heating and rebending the steering arms is usually required for dropped-axle applications.

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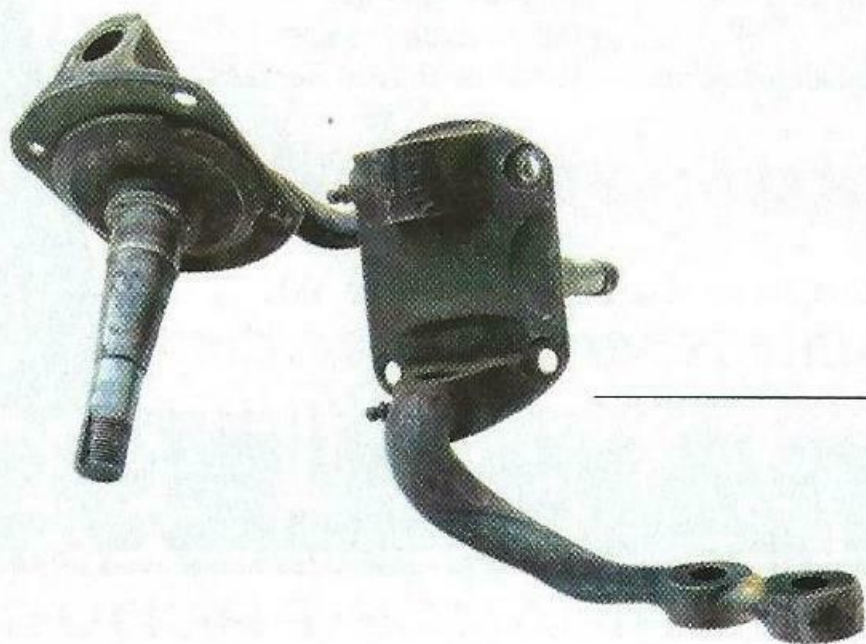
'28-'31 MODEL A

These use bolt-on steering arms with integrated steering balls that accept spring-loaded tie-rod ends. They can be used on later axles but require a spacer behind the inner bearing and other minor mods.



'32-'34

These are basically the same as Model A spindles but the steering arm is now part of the spindle casting. The steering balls can be removed for conventional tapered tie-rod ends. The advantage of using these is they lower the car more than other Ford spindles but require '40 kingpins, a thrust bearing on the bottom side of the axle, and a spacer behind the backing plates. Also, disc brake kits don't bolt up, so other minor mods are required.



'35-'36

There are minor differences between '35 and '36 spindles, but for the hot rodder they don't matter. These were the first years Ford used cross steering, so one steering arm has one hole for the tie rod only and the other has two—one for the tie rod and the other for the steering arm. They also use conventional tapered tie rod ends.



'37-'41

Known as "round style," they are the most popular hot rod spindles for their look and cross-steer steering arm, and because they don't require modifications. All early Ford brakes bolt on, including Lincoln drum and disc brake kits.



'42-'48

Known as "square" spindles, they have two advantages over earlier spindles: They have the longer kingpin bushing for less wear, and the steering arm is slightly lower for dropped axles. All brakes bolt on, including Lincoln drum and disc brake kits.



'48-'52 FORD TRUCK

In '48, Ford switched to these spindles incorporating the C-shaped bolt-on arm and steering ball for its new line of F-1 trucks. One side has the arm cast in while the driver side has the bolt-on arm. We've seen guys use two driver side spindles and make their own arms—very cool. Look at the Doane Spencer roadster for that trick.



REPRODUCTION HOT ROD SPINDLES

This Super Bell spindle is typical of the reproductions on the market today from a number of manufacturers. They are designed for differently configured bolt-on steering arms depending on the amount of drop on the axle you are using.
