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# Choosing The Proper Gear (Box)

## PUTTING OPTIONS BEFORE RPOs

**READER'S QUESTION:** I HAVE A '62 327/340HP CORVETTE I BOUGHT EIGHT YEARS AGO WITH WHAT I BELIEVE TO BE ITS ORIGINAL T-10 FOUR-SPEED BASED ON CASTING DATES. IT HAS A 2.20:1 FIRST GEAR BASED ON COMPARING INPUT TO OUTPUT SHAFT REVOLUTIONS WHEN IT WAS REBUILT LAST YEAR, WHICH MAKES IT A CLOSE-RATIO TRANSMISSION. A FELLOW CORVETTE CLUB MEMBER SAYS THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE. HE SAYS THE M-21 CLOSE-RATIO FOUR-SPEED WASN'T AVAILABLE UNTIL 1966, AFTER THE T-10 WAS REPLACED BY THE MUNCIE. ISN'T IT TRUE THAT CLOSE-RATIO FOUR-SPEEDS WERE AVAILABLE BEFORE 1966?

**RESPONSE:** Yes, that's correct—the very first Corvette four-speed in 1957 was a close-ratio transmission with a 2.20:1 first gear, and ALL Corvette four-speeds were close-ratio through 1961; the wide-ratio four-speed didn't appear until 1962.

Semantics are involved here as well. Although both close- and wide-ratio transmissions were available beginning in 1962, the M-21 **OPTION** (RPO M21) for the close-ratio version didn't appear on the order blank as a customer choice until 1966. That was the first year the customer could make the choice between wide- and close-ratio transmissions (on some engines). Prior to that, the four-speed option was always **M-20**, and the engine selection made the ratio choice, not the customer. Here's the story on four-speed transmission availability:

**1957-1961:** All four-speeds were the Borg-Warner T-10, and all were close-ratio with a 2.20:1 first gear. 1957-1960 transmissions had a cast-iron main case and an aluminum tailhousing, and the main case changed to aluminum in 1961.

**1962-MID-1963:** The 250hp and 300hp engines got the new wide-ratio T-10, and the 340hp and 360hp engines got the close-ratio version.

**MID-1963 TO END OF 1963:** The T-10 was replaced by the new Muncie

four-speed as a running change during the year, with the small front bearing retainer; both the main case and the tailhousing were aluminum. Engines that were 250 hp and 300 hp got the wide-ratio version, and the 340hp and 360hp engines got the close-ratio version.

**1964:** The Muncie bearing retainer diameter was increased and 250hp and 300hp engines got the wide-ratio version, and the 365hp and 375hp engines got the close-ratio version.

**1965:** The 250hp and 300hp engines got the wide-ratio version. The 350hp, 365hp, 375hp, and 396/425hp engines got the close-ratio version.

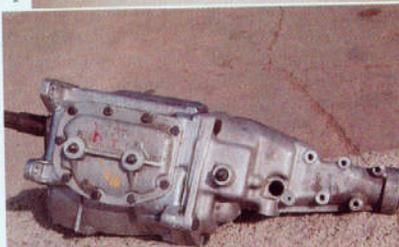
**1966:** The 300hp was only available with the wide-ratio. Customers could choose wide- or close-ratio with the 350hp and 390hp engines, and the 427/425hp engine got the close-ratio version.

**1967:** The 300hp was only available with the wide-ratio. Customers could choose wide- or close-ratio with the 350/390/400hp engines and the 435hp got the close-ratio version.

**SUMMARY:** Although the "M-21" **OPTION** didn't appear on the order blank until 1966, Corvette four-speeds were available with the close-ratio gearset right from the beginning in 1957. ■



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1 The first Borg-Warner T-10 Corvette four-speed, with a cast-iron main case, aluminum tailhousing, and close-ratio gearset; this transmission was used in all four-speed Corvettes through 1960.

2 The 1961-mid-1963 aluminum tailhousing T-10; in 1962, a wide-ratio version was specified for the first time on 250hp and 300hp engines.

3 The all-aluminum Muncie four-speed, introduced in mid-1963 as a running change in both wide- and close-ratio versions, replacing the T-10. Engine choice dictated the ratios until 1966, when the customer could choose a close-ratio version on some engines by specifying "M-21" on the order blank.