

Quoted portions by [Curtis Redgap](#). Excerpted from [An Insider's Guide to Plymouth](#).

The Torqueflite automatic

Slow to get a fully automatic transmission on the market, Chrysler wasted no time in getting beyond its two speed [Powerflite](#). The [Torqueflite](#) was quite simply the best [automatic transmission](#) produced in the 20th century. It was simple, reliable, dependable, quiet, efficient, economical, and gave Chrysler cars a performance advantage.

The Torqueflite centered on a rather simple Simpson planetary gear set, named after its inventor, Howard Simpson — who licensed it to Ford in 1953 and Chrysler in 1955. As later racing versions of the Torqueflite proved, you could increase the amount of torque capability by machining more "beef" into the gear set. Late 1956 Chrysler 300 Bs were equipped with the three speed Torqueflite, along with Imperials, and the senior models of the Chrysler line. For once, Chrysler was prepared for that type of situation, and had engineered a conversion kit for MoPar fans that wanted the flexibility and capability of the new Torqueflite.

Ford was so impressed with the Torqueflite that (according to Curtis Redgap) it quietly bought the rights to manufacture a sort of copycat. The story was quickly picked up by the automotive magazines; Ford reportedly paid Chrysler \$7.5 million, which was a big chunk of change in 1957! The 1958 Ford "Cruise-O-Matic" was available on all standard Ford engines; it was not a Torqueflite, but a Ford automatic built around the Simpson gear set. It was heavier, with more parts, keeping the Ford derived clutch band controls.