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**SUPPLYING THE VOLKSWAGEN
GROUP**

OEM Strategy Service



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Volkswagen Group - Top 10 best-selling models

Volkswagen Group Top 10 best-selling global models (by Sales brand, Global nameplate) 2008-2013-2018 (Source: IHS Automotive, March 2015)

Data Table available in Full Version

Volkswagen Golf

1. Volkswagen Golf

According to data provided by IHS Automotive, the worldwide best-selling model produced by the Volkswagen Group is the Golf. The model has been the brand's best-selling model over the past 15 years, apart from when the Polo took the top spot in 2010. In 2013, VW sold slightly more than 680,000 units of the Golf, which is the highest total number since approximately 700,000 units were sold in 2004; over the past 15 years, the best year for Golf sales was in 2002, when 732,000 units were purchased around the world. Based on total Volkswagen brand sales of 6.38 million vehicles over 2013, the Golf represents 10.65% of total company sales.

The first-generation Mark I Golf was introduced in 1974. Designed by Giorgetto Giugiaro, the range included three- or five-door hatchback bodystyles and a front-engine, front-wheel drive powertrain. Other body configurations included: a saloon, known (by market and generation) as Jetta, Vento or Bora; an estate, badged Golf Variant; and a light commercial vehicle, widely known as Caddy. Other names given to the first-gen Golf hatchback around the world included Rabbit and Caribe, respectively used in the United States and Mexico. In South Africa, Volkswagen produced an updated version of this first Golf, known as Citi Golf, between 1984 and 2009. In China, where hatchback versions are badged Golf, locally-manufactured versions of the Jetta saloon are also marketed as Lavida and Sagitar, dependent on the JV manufacturer.

The first-gen Golf was the third front-wheel drive model introduced by Volkswagen, after the launch of the Passat and Scirocco coupe in 1973; it has been suggested that the Scirocco was used to prove Golf mechanicals in advance of volume production. The exterior design of the Golf featured a short bonnet (hood) covering a transverse-mounted engine, while the wheels were positioned at the far corners of the vehicle to maximize interior space. The front suspension used MacPherson struts at the front, while the rear had a semi-independent torsion beam set up – this was one of the first examples of this now common suspension arrangement.

The first Golf was offered with a wide choice of four-cylinder petrol and diesel engines driven via a four- or five-speed manual or a three-speed automatic transmission. In 1976, Volkswagen introduced the first Golf GTI, one of the first examples where a manufacturer combined the practicality of a hatchback with the performance of a sports car. The GTI used either a 1.6- or 1.8-litre engine fitted with twin carburetors, although these were later replaced by a Bosch K-Jetronic mechanical fuel injection system. With further suspension upgrades, the GTI was a 'hot hatch' before the phrase had been invented and the model is still considered to have been ground-breaking in terms of engineering and performance.

In 1983, Volkswagen unveiled the Mark II Golf at the IAA Frankfurt motor show. The new model was larger in every dimension, including wheelbase, which was

extended from 2,400mm to 2,470mm. The increase in size moved the Golf from the B- to the C-segment. The model maintained the overall look of the Mark I, although updates improved the aerodynamics to where the car achieved a 0.34Cd drag coefficient. The larger body added 120kg to total vehicle weight, but improved suspension damping and the addition of standard four-wheel disc brakes helped maintain characteristic performance.

This second-gen Golf was offered with a wide range of engines and trim levels, with a series of low-volume 'specialist' versions topping out the range. The first Mark II GTI was introduced in 1984. For the first two years of production of the model used an updated version of the same 1.8-litre 8v four-cylinder engine seen in the first-gen car, but this was replaced by a 1.8-litre DOHC 16v four-cylinder engine in 1986. The soft top Mark I Golf Cabriolet was carried over for the second-gen range and only replaced with the introduction of the Mark III car.

New variants for the range included the G60, which featured a supercharged version of the 8v four-cylinder engine. A further addition was the Golf Syncro, which used a four-wheel drive system developed by Steyer-Daimler-Puch (now series vehicle assembler Magna Steyr, based in Graz, Austria). This was a version of the same system first seen on the T25 Transporter. Other versions of the Mark II included the Golf Strommer, which incorporated features to allow light off-road use, and the luxury Golf Limited. With just 71 examples built, this remains the most exclusive Golf variant to date.

The Mark III Golf was introduced across global markets between 1991 and 1994, with the later North American introduction related to production issues at the plant in Puebla, Mexico. Although this version carried over similar exterior proportions, by this point the design had suffered the same fate as that of other 'breakthrough' models, where updates had watered down the taught lines of the original design. While the body was marginally larger, it was also stiffer than the out-going model, but beneath this the same MacPherson strut suspension and transmissions had been carried over.

This was the first Golf range to include a wagon version. Together with his new bodystyle, customers were again offered a wide choice of engines, generally matched to trim level. The entry-level engine was the 1.4-litre four-cylinder petrol. While relatively affordable, these versions were cynically short of standard equipment, with some versions having more button blanks in the instrument panel than actual buttons (in 1992 the Golf, Vento and Passat were offered with optional dual front airbags for the first time).

At the other end of the scale, the Golf GTI used a 2.0-litre 16v four-cylinder engine developing 148bhp, and this was positioned at the top of the range until VW introduced the Golf VR6 in 1993. This version used a new 2.8-litre DOHC V6 engine with the cylinder banks arranged in a narrow 15 degree V. This format meant that all six pistons could fit under a single cylinder head, while the narrow angle also helped with installation in the engine bay. Producing 172bhp, the VR6 was one of the quickest Golf versions to date, but the weight of the engine detracted from overall handling.

The fourth-gen Golf was introduced in 1998. Again, this version was larger and heavier than the out-going car - the wheelbase now exceeded 2,500mm. In 1975, the entry-level Golf 1100 had weighed 750kg; with the Golf IV, the entry-level 1.4-litre version weighed 1,090kg (the heaviest VR6 versions weighed in at 1,401kg). A substantial portion of this weight gain was due to engine size and chassis strengthening to comply with new safety regulations, but weight was also gained through the addition of luxury trim items, highlighting how comfort had taken precedence over performance.

The upside of this saw Volkswagen starting to deliver the superior cabin ergonomics and interior fit and finish for which it is now famous. The cost of developing the necessary parts and processes for this was supported in part by cost sharing across other group company models, including the Audi A3, Seat Toledo and Škoda Octavia. To counter the related increase in weight VW added more powerful engines, including a 1.8-litre 20v five-cylinder engine for the GTI. The VR6 featured an updated version of the V6 engine, with a new 24-valve layout and variable valve timing.

The fourth-gen Golf also had a related saloon, but while this was still known as Jetta in North America and South Africa, in all other markets the model was renamed Bora. The exterior of the car was almost unique, sharing only the front doors with the Golf, although the interior was almost a direct carryover from the hatchback. As with the Mark II Cabriolet (which was based on the Mark I car), the third-gen Cabriolet was given a Mark IV-style facelift and carried over. The range-topping version of the Mark IV Golf was the R32. Based on the VR6, this featured a larger 3.2-litre engine delivering 240bhp and a new multilink rear suspension, which helped to make room for the 4motion all-wheel-drive (AWD) system. Other features included an updated suspension and brakes and 18" wheels. Approximately 5,000 units of the R32 were produced before the Mark IV was withdrawn.

The Mark V version of the Golf was launched in Europe over 2003 and '04 and in North America the model was introduced for the 2007 model year. In the US and Canada, VW revived the Rabbit name for the standard model, while the performance variant was referred to as just GTI. With a sloped hood line and integrated headlight clusters, this version of the Golf took the model's design in a new direction which is still visible in the latest Mark VII model. The Mark V was considerably larger than the previous generation Golf, where the wheelbase alone was 66mm longer at 2,578mm. Although this had a negative impact on overall vehicle weight, the chassis had improved torsional rigidity. A five-door Mark IV Golf GTI with a 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine weighed 1,149kg, while the equivalent Mark V version weighed in at 1,328kg.

To off-set these changes, the Mark V introduced a series of new direct injection (FSI, fuel stratified injection) engines. These included a 1.4-litre TSI Twincharger petrol engine which combined a turbo and a supercharger to broaden the engine's powerband, while GTI versions used a direct injection 2.0-litre turbo which delivered 200bhp. The range-topping R32 version featured a mildly revised V6 engine, a version-specific chrome front fascia and centre-mounted dual exhaust pipes. This was driven via a six-speed DSG (direct shift) semi-automatic transmission. All versions of the Mark V Golf featured a multilink rear suspension in place of the torsion beam axle set up.

The Cabriolet versions were withdrawn with the introduction of the Mark V in favour of the Eos hard-top convertible. While this model used largely the same platform and powertrains, the body shared no outer panels with the Golf. This generation also included a Variant, or wagon, known as Sportwagen in North America, while the new high-roof Golf Plus compact MPV made its first appearance.

In 2008 Volkswagen introduced the Mark VI Golf, with global rollouts following the European launch. The reason given for the abbreviated lifespan of the preceding Mark V Golf was related to production - the previous car had proven prohibitively expensive to manufacture and so, following improvements to the assembly processes, it was considered appropriate to remaster the full vehicle. In effect, the Mark VI is a half-sister of the model it replaced, but that is not to say it was the result of a needless exercise, as NVH characteristics and interior quality were both improved.

To reduce emissions, all normally-aspirated engines were replaced with TSI direct-injection motors, while the 2.0-litre TFSI in the GTI was tuned to deliver a small increase in power. Emissions concerns were also behind the withdrawal of the VR6-powered R32, which was replaced by the Golf R. This top-of-the-range version featured an updated 2.0 TFSI engine producing 270bhp, delivering power via the 4motion AWD system.

The most recent edition of the Golf, the Mark VII, was released late 2012 and 2013. The new model looks remarkably similar to recent versions of the Golf, which could either be related to not wanting to change a successful design or a case of not knowing in which direction to take the model. Yet while there are only minor cosmetic changes to the exterior, the interior is again improved over even the Mark VI car, with impressive material quality and overall fit and finish.